

MID WEST ON THE WAY UP

Like most other regions, the Mid West region has been struggling over the last few years following the construction boom in the mining/resource sector. Master Builders director Michael McLean reports on prospects for the Mid West region.

THE Mid West region comprises an enormous area of 472,336sqkm and a permanent population of almost 58,000 people, most of whom live in Geraldton. Other towns in the region include Carnamah, Coorow, Cue, Dongara, Green Head, Horrocks Beach, Kalbarri, Leeman, Meekatharra, Mingenew, Morawa, Murchison Settlement, Mount Magnet, Northampton, Perenjori, Port Gregory, Sandstone, Three Springs, Wiluna and Yaloo.

A few weeks ago, Master Builders and REIWA jointly hosted an Economic Prospects Forum for the Mid West region in Geraldton. This forum was held in the context of the region experiencing:

- A decline in new dwelling approvals
- A decline in renovations and additions
- A decline in commercial construction work
- An increase in multi-unit dwellings
- A reduction in real estate sales despite an increase in listings
- A reduction in rental listings and median rents.

Despite these sobering statistics, an optimistic outlook for the Mid West region was clearly evident.

This has been partially fuelled by the growth in magnetite exploration, an increase in iron ore prices and a healthy farming/agricultural sector.

It is encouraging that the Mid West Development Commission is working collaboratively with local businesses in conjunction with the State Government to

make Geraldton the "gateway to the Mid West region".

This is not a fanciful vision but rather based on actually achieving objectives.

Tourism features prominently in the Mid West Development Commission's plans. Some of the exciting and innovative projects on their action list include:

- A skywalk at the Kalbarri gorge
- Tourism at the Abrolhos Islands
- A Kalbarri to Shark Bay four-wheel drive trail
- Geotourism adventures in the Murchison
- Coastal nodes for caravan enthusiasts
- Rangeland parks for the nature lovers.

Each of these projects will increase visitor numbers to the region and create investment opportunities and jobs, including for building industry folk.

It is pleasing that the State Government's new procurement strategy will support local businesses and create more jobs for Western Australians.

Master Builders supports this strategy and now calls on the State Government to back the Mid West Development Commission's plans to boost the local economy.

The recent Federal Government funding announcement that will result in an expansion to the Geraldton Airport is a great start.

With an abundance of good affordable land for prospective homebuyers, the Mid West region needs a catalyst to boost consumer confidence and job opportunities.

Nature's Window, Kalbarri National Park.

