

Guru says Geraldton could become a 'top tourist spot'

SPECIAL REPORT

■ Jessica Millward

Geraldton has "huge potential" to be a top WA tourist destination according to self-titled 'retail guru' John Stanley.

Mr Stanley was guest speaker at a Mid West Chamber of Commerce and Industry's function held at the African Reef Resort last Monday evening.

The event was attended by about 80 local stakeholders, including representatives from business in Geraldton, Morawa and Dongara, the City of Greater Geraldton, the Mid West Development Commission and Regional Development Australia.

Mr Stanley has more than 38 years' experience as a retail consultant and conference speaker.

He has worked in over 36 countries and has enormous experience and understanding of the issues involved in developing a town or city to have vibrant, active centres and a strong and healthy business economy.

His talk "Ghost Town, Clone Town or Home Town" focused on 10 key areas which need to be addressed to build a 'home town'.

"A ghost town is when you walk down the street and 60 per cent of the shops are boarded up, a clone town is when you are not sure what the vibe of the town is, and a home town is a unique and vibrant place to live or visit," he said.

The 10 key areas are:

1. Business, community, schools and council working towards the same goal
2. Farmers' Markets
3. Regular festivals/events
4. A vibrant coffee culture
5. Day makers not salespeople
6. Retailer networking to keep money local
7. Family-friendly facilities
8. The right retail and activity mix for the community



Point Moore Lighthouse is the oldest in Western Australia and a definite tourist attraction.

Picture: WA News

9. A "bricks" and "clicks" business community

10. A business community that measures standards

Mr Stanley said small businesses were the "mortar and bricks" of the community, and owners need to be social-media savvy to market their businesses effectively.

He said one puzzling thing about Geraldton was there were two farmers' markets,

and neither was located in the central business district. He said for Geraldton to become a tourist destination, it needed four festivals or events each year, which were recognised around the State, night markets and it needed to promote its current attractions.

"The Point Moore lighthouse is the oldest in Western Australia, but there is no emphasis on this.

"There are a lot of hidden gems in Geraldton, there is huge potential," he said.

He said having the City of Greater Geraldton, MWCCI and Mid West Development Commission all working together, and all on the same page, was a fantastic bonus for the future development of the city and the region.

Mid West Chamber of Commerce and Industry chief executive officer Rob Jefferies

"There are a lot of hidden gems in Geraldton, there is huge potential
John Stanley

said it was now time to turn these ideas into actions as soon as practicable.

He said some things could be put in place straight away, but others would require time to put together proposals and seek funding.

He said one thing he took away from Mr Stanley's speech was that Geraldton needed something quirky to attract people, a point of difference which was "a bit of fun".

"We need to create a place that people want to visit and enjoy and continually lift our standards so that people talk about their experiences in Geraldton and the Mid West," he said.

Mr Jefferies said the areas of retail, tourism and small business were the biggest opportunity for growth.

"We're excited about the opportunities," he said.

POTENTIAL POINTS

Business economy

- \$1 spent by local with local business = \$4 circulates in town
- \$1 spent by tourist = \$7 circulates in Geraldton
- Get a visitor to stop and they on average spend \$110

Geraldton's Biggest attractions

- Point Moore Lighthouse (oldest in WA)
- Hourman Abrolhos Islands
- HMAS Sydney Memorial
- Biggest fishing fleet in WA

Unique to Geraldton

- Community culture
- Coastal resort
- \$30 million investment to make it a destination