

Project push to boost jobs

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KEY infrastructure projects should be fast-tracked over the next 12 months to promote jobs in Ballarat.

In the wake of the Lihir Gold job losses, the Committee for Ballarat says the Ballarat West Growth Area and airport precinct projects could provide jobs in construction and ongoing employment from industry within a year.

The committee's chief executive officer, Doug Lloyd, said despite Lihir's decision to sell its Ballarat operations, the city's economy was robust and diverse.

He said sectors such as information and communications technology, education and health were well represented in the local economy and had held up well in difficult economic times.

But Ballarat could not afford to be complacent, he said.

"We need to accelerate the process of getting the Ballarat West Growth Area developed, whether it is the airport precinct or the other commercial areas that need to be developed," Mr Lloyd said.

"Now is the time to develop those earlier with sustainable and future-oriented businesses."

Ballarat mayor Judy Verlin said it was important to get the planning of the precincts right.

"The development at the airport is at a critical first stage because we've got to get the infrastructure right," Cr Verlin said.

"By working with all levels of government we are going to ensure we have strong, logical, sustainable growth in that region as a high priority."

She said yesterday's Solar Cities opening at the airport was an example of the city's commitment to the manufacturing sector.

Ballarat City Council chief executive officer Anthony Schinck said planning for the area's growth had been under way for some time.

"Collectively, the committee and the council (need) to work with other tiers of government to make sure we are moving as quickly as possible to see outcomes on the ground at Ballarat West."