



SuperTown letdown

by ROSS VERNE

THE future of Collie's SuperTown status is in doubt with no money allocated to the initiative for at least the next four years.

No new money was allocated for the development plan in the last financial year or for 2013-14, with forward estimates also showing nothing will be spent.

Collie got an initial \$11 million grant in 2012 but the future of a further \$29 million worth of planned projects is now in doubt.

The cancelled Country Local Government Fund will mean the shire will also lose out on \$700,000 earmarked for redeveloping Collie swimming pool, with the money now required to come from elsewhere.

Shire president Wayne Sanford said uncertainty about SuperTowns, coupled with the cancellation of education and transport spending in Collie, undermined the government's commitment to build the town towards absorbing some of the state's predicted population growth.

"It does pose the question of how those chosen in the SuperTowns program can continue to progress the important projects identified into the future if there is to be limited opportunity to access further funding," Cr Sanford said.

"The timing of projects will need to be reassessed if there is limited ability to fund them, without doubt.

"Reduced future funding may mean the time frame in delivering on projects important for our community may take longer than if they were funded with direct SuperTowns grants." A Department of Regional Development and Lands information document produced at the outset of the program said though the government was committed to the initiative over the long term, funding would not be allocated for subsequent years beyond the initial outlay.

"This is not a short term program. The Western Australian government is committed to this initiative over the long term, as growth will occur over a number of years," the document said.

"Research and planning at a regional and local level must be undertaken before funding can be set aside for ongoing years."

Cr Sanford asked at last week's council meeting that council write to regional development and lands minister Brendon Grylls to seek confirmation of the government's support for the SuperTowns project.

Cr Sanford said council and the community were extremely grateful for the initial \$11 million grant, but said it was only part of the overall strategy to transform the town.

"Of concern for me are the recent fiscal decisions and policy announcements by our State government which tend to be, in my opinion, adverse to the principals in establishing growth and recognition of Collie as a regional centre which is attractive for people to live, visit and invest," Cr Sanford said.

Cr Sanford indicated there was a contradiction in the state government promoting population growth in Collie while cutting education funding and removing public transport links.

"One of the principals of SuperTowns is the growing of population in the regional centres and with this would be the expectation that population growth would bring a greater demand for schools and education services," he said.

"The Public Transport Authority's decision to remove the Trans West bus service from Boyup Brook to Collie to Bunbury also defies the logic that a growing community and its surrounds won't need this service.

"People will come and live in Collie and fulfill the government's vision based on amenity."



SuperTown uncertainty: Collie shire president Wayne Sanford is concerned at the lack of funding allocated for planned projects in the 2013-14 state budget