

## No room for complacency

# BORNEO BARRACKS

Closure of the Borneo Barracks military base would mean a loss of two per cent of the Toowoomba region's economy, says Highfields Village developer Mac Stirling.

It would cost 840 jobs and \$105 million annually, and a couple of hundred rental properties would become vacant. Mr Stirling said that while the barracks had some "breathing space," there was no room for complacency.

"We have to stand up and be counted. KR and the foundry are shut, and now we have the abattoirs closing.

"What else are we going to lose if we don't stand up and fight for these things?"

The future of the barracks will be his topic when he speaks to the next Toowoomba Chamber of Commerce business breakfast on Friday, February 26.

"Late last year Senator Faulkner announced the

government wouldn't accept the defence audit's consideration of super bases," Mr Stirling said.

"But I'm looking at the time when we could have another bite at the cherry here.

"We need to start lobbying on it so when the next round of consultation comes around we are a strong voice to maintain something that's been a part of Toowoomba's fabric since 1947."

He said it remains to be seen what are the intentions of the current Defence Department.

"The flaw in the whole argument for super bases is that, while they might be a good strategic concept, there has been no analysis of the cost of establishing them.

"It's not just a matter of turning off the lights at Borneo Barracks."

Both the Toowoomba Chamber of Commerce and the broader community

need to stay alert, Mr Stirling said.

"We could argue we could sit back with our feet up and say we have a couple of years, et cetera, et cetera," he said.

"Our feeling is these things hurt when they happen, and it doesn't matter when they happen."

The population of Highfields had been growing at a rate of eight per cent until 2007, but it had now slowed to about 5.8 per cent.

"We could be looking at 20,000 people in the catchment area of our shopping centre by 2016 - but that's a long way away.

"These things affect the family life of defence personnel.

"There's a quality of life in the Toowoomba area and Highfields that is second to none, compared to Death Valley in North Adelaide."