

BOOM TIMES

Tourism set to soar with bridge, Gateway

A LEADING figure in the Australian hotel industry has predicted Wollongong is on track to become the fastest-growing tourist "mecca" in the Asia Pacific.

Figures released exclusively to the *Mercury* this week reveal the number of guest nights in Wollongong increased by almost 10 per cent in the past year - five times more than the state average.

By GREG ELLIS



Tourism takings were up by 7 per cent, compared to 5 per cent for NSW.

Matt Davidson, who left an executive position with a leading

hotel chain to set up a national consultancy firm here, said the city was starting to hit the international radar in its own right.

"If what is planned for Wollongong does come to fruition this will become the fastest-growing tourism mecca in the Asia Pacific and Australia," he said.

Tourism Wollongong chairman Jim Eddy described it as the most

exciting period he had seen in 25 years. The 500 new hotel rooms had either just been completed, were under construction or out to tender.

"Seeing our region has 1284 rooms, an extra 500 is about a 40 per cent increase in rooms available," he said.

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NEWS EXTRA

The only
way
is up

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