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# FIFO tax 'destroying' region

**Zoe Keenan**

WA Nationals' lead Senate candidate Nick Fardell believes the fringe benefit tax should be abolished in a 10-year trial to allow the Goldfields to recover from the damage of the fly-in, fly-out workforce practice.

Mr Fardell has urged all businesses and residents against FIFO to rally against it at tomorrow's Productivity Commission public forum in Kalgoorlie-Boulder.

Residents can have their say on remote tax schemes such as the fringe benefit tax, which has been blamed for driving up the FIFO workforce, as well as on the zone tax offset and remote area allowance. The FBT allows companies to write off the cost of flights, meals and accommodation as a business expense.

The long-awaited review was announced in November last year after concerns the schemes had failed to keep up with changes.

Mr Fardell said if no action was taken by both major parties to change the FBT and remote area allowance, the current situation would "destroy the Goldfields".

"Both taxes have contributed to

the cancer of the bush — FIFO," he said. "Everyone has worked so hard to put a good picture on Kalgoorlie, it's a great community but FIFO can be changed with a stroke of a pen overnight at a Federal Government level.

"We need to abolish the FBT on remote and regional housing throughout WA for a 10-year trial."

Mr Fardell said since the legislation had come into play, it had seriously affected communities such as Kambalda.

"It has taken 30 years to destroy Kambalda; there are 230 empty houses down there and they can't even get the government to fix a pool," he said.

"When we have more people in regional communities, the local government gets more rates to put towards more services in the area, rather than working out how to reduce services."

Mr Fardell called for an increase to the zone tax offset allowance, which because of legislation changes in 2015, meant people who worked but did not live in a zone were no longer eligible.

He said the single biggest issue in Kalgoorlie-Boulder was liveability and increasing the allowance for

residents would relieve increased transport and living expenses.

"The cost of living, transport and everything in regional WA is a lot higher and the current zone allowance in Kalgoorlie doesn't even buy you a carton of locally made WA beer," he said.

The Productivity Commission will determine the future of remote tax assistance and the final report is set to be handed to the Australian Government in February 2020. The public forum will be at the City of Kalgoorlie-Boulder administration building tomorrow from 3pm.