

'Insects' would be wasteful-retailers

by MARG STORK

NOBODY appears upset over last week's decision by Dandenong Council to scrap the proposed \$50,000 Palm Plaza insects project.

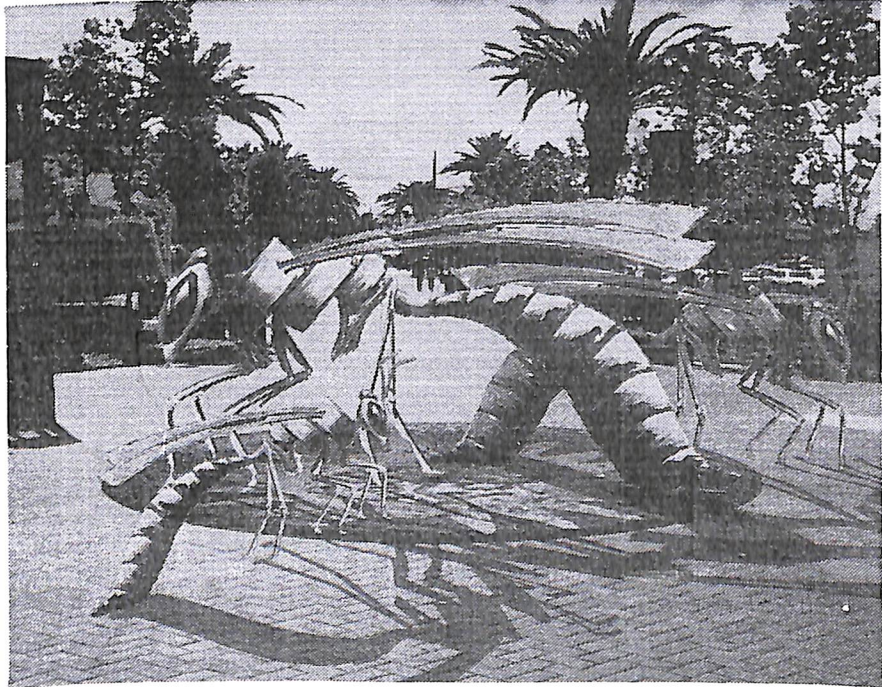
The general consensus among business and retail people to whom 'The Journal' spoke was that the idea was impractical and that the money should be spent in other ways in a bid to attract people back to the city.

As reported in last Thursday's 'Journal', the council has deferred until its budget discussions a plan to erect five big vandal-proof insect sculptures in the plaza and it appears almost certain the project will not proceed.

The president of Dandenong Chamber of Commerce and Industry, Mr Jamie Sturgess, said his concern had been over the possible spending of \$50,000 on such a project "at this time". He said, however, it was pleasing the council was at least looking at new projects and seeking to encourage people to shop in Dandenong.

Former chamber president Mr Graeme Mullens, the co-proprietor of Dandenong Central Flo-rist in Palm Plaza, said: "A better idea of something to encourage people to shop in the central business district would be to offer more shopper comforts such as seating, covered areas and increased lighting and security, especially with the free Friday night parking.

"Perhaps the council could look at some sort of community project such as a bandstand or a covered area where recitals and other events could be held in



HOW Palm Plaza might look if the insects sculpture project goes ahead.

the plaza, other than static displays."

Mr Laurie Modica, of Modica Travel Service, who has been in business in Dandenong for 23 years and was among the first tenants of the Dandenong Hub Shopping Centre, said he had travelled the world and described malls in other cities as "beautiful... they are so well lit you could take a picture at any time in them without using a flashlight".

He said: "But after 5.30pm in Palm Plaza there is not a soul. We are afraid to open any more. Increased security and lighting is a must. I've lived in Dandenong for 40 years and McCrae Street was never so dark and desolate as it is now. Lighting is the key and the council should get rid of that monstrosity (sale ring hall) in the middle of the plaza. Spend

the \$50,000 on lighting and security."

Mrs Helen Mills, the manager of Bed Bath 'n' Table in Palm Plaza, said she was continuously dealing with the public and "know how they feel". Mrs Mills said: "The money should be spent on improved lighting. There are no lights and it's scary here.

"And if they want people to come to shop in Dandenong, the council should provide under-cover comfort and more free parking. People have to dodge gales and rain and put up with heat in summer. No wonder they shop at district shopping centres where it's cool in summer and warm in winter. They want convenience and that is one way to attract shoppers back."

Mr Stan Mavroudis, who has operated Stan's Mens-

wear in Palm Plaza for 14 years, said he was happy that the council acknowledged the problems and was prepared to provide money to promote the shopping centre. He said: "However, it would be better spent on providing an atmosphere which welcomes people to shop, such as extensive lighting and under-cover shopping in the plaza, providing 24-hour security, and entertainment areas and, most of all, creating a pleasant, bright, open shopping mall by getting rid of that white elephant in the middle of the plaza.

"Let's get with the times and modernise and resurrect Dandenong, which for too many years has been stagnating while others are surging ahead. We need retail doors to re-open and not to close, so let's get it right."