

BUSINESS SOUTH-EAST

Shops fill Myer's shoes

By CASEY NEILL

DANDENONG Plaza will unveil its \$40 million post-Myer transformation in less than two weeks.

Myer announced last September that the struggling store represented less than 1 per cent of its total group sales and would close the following month.

It marked the end of a 40-year history, and retailers expressed concern that the departure would leave the centre without a drawcard.

But Plaza manager GPT Group has bounced back with a rejuvenated space and nine new retailers.

JB-Hi Home, Aldi, Daiso and Trade Secret will open their doors on Wednesday 15 October, starting four days of celebrations.

"We're actually opening two weeks earlier than we thought," GPT Group development manager Paul Neilsen said.

"It gives everyone that extra two weeks of trade before Christmas."

Happy Africa grocer, a cafe and a custom-designed children's playground are also part of the redevelopment that started on 1 November last year.

It created about 500 jobs throughout construction and almost 50 new long-term jobs.

"The majority of works finished



GPT Group's Paul Neilsen and City of Greater Dandenong Mayor Jim Memeti in the new Aldi space. 1/28/2014
Pictures: GARY SISSONS

three months was a lot of demolition works," Mr Neilsen said.

"This was 40-year-old structure that Myer occupied.

"A lot of the costs associated you wouldn't actually be able to see.

"It's a full upgrade of the services. Mechanical upgrade, includ-

ing the air-conditioning, fire services upgrade, etcetera."

The fit-out includes timber slat features, three-dimensional wall tiles and new escalators.

Mayor Jim Memeti said retailers were looking forward to 15 October.

"I know the figures Myer were do-

ing here weren't great," he said.

"I think the new retailers will turn over more money than Myer did and will, hopefully, increase foot traffic in the plaza."

Opening festivities will start with Cr Jim Memeti cutting a ribbon to officially open the precinct at 10am and

include free activities and giveaways.

Tumbarumba, Asanti Dance Group and the Royal Polynesian Dance Group will perform, and Daiso will host a Manga artist who'll draw free selfies.

Daiso Industries Australia national marketing manager Natasha Lyubic said the Dandenong store was the Japanese company's sixth in Victoria.

She said every item in store was priced at \$2.80, but Daiso wasn't a typical discount retailer.

"It really has to be experienced," she said.

"A regular shopping trip becomes a treasure hunt.

"We sell stationery, personal care, beauty, crockery, toys, travel accessories...

"There are things you wouldn't realise you needed."

The Dandenong store is Australian-owned discount fashion retailer Trade Secret's fifth and will stock big brand items.

JB is relocating from its existing location on Cleeland Street, Dandenong, and expanding to include whitegoods and other home wares.

A 3800 square metre space on Level 4 is still available, as is a 130 square metre spot downstairs.

Visit www.dandenongplaza.com.au for a full program of the opening event.

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Post-Myer fears unfounded

By CASEY NEILL

DANDENONG Plaza is a "bargain haven" following its \$40 million post-Myer transformation.

Aldi, JB Hi-Fi Home, Daiso and Trade Secret opened their doors last Wednesday, 15 October.

Dandenong Retail Traders Association (DRTA) chairwoman Glenys Cooper visited the following day.

"They had a queue there and a security guard on the door, which was a nice thing to see," she said.

"I've never seen a queue out the front of the shop like that before, it was just great.

"I thought that was a very good sign.

"It had more energy in there."

Ms Cooper said the redevelopment would change the centre's profile.

"It's certainly a bargain haven," she said.

"It's going to be great for most of the traders there.

"Those who aren't used to having their profile like that will need to change their marketing strategy.

"That's the kind of customer that will now be attracted to the centre."

Last September Myer announced that the struggling store represented less than 1 per cent of its total group sales and would close the following month.

It marked the end of a 40-year history and retailers expressed concern that the departure would leave the centre without a drawcard.

Full registers at Aldi from 8.30am, full change rooms at Trade Secret, and lines at Daiso and JB Hi-Fi Home quashed that fear.

Mayor Jim Memeti opens the redevelopment alongside GPT Group development manager Paul Neilsen. 128346



Agnes Schild and Mereani Qalovakawasa greet Daiso customers. 128346

