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Tall hopes for Palm Plaza

By Cam Lucadou-Wells

Gazing at the double-rows of tall trees lining Palm Plaza, there's no great secret where the name came from.

However, it's interesting to recall the great fanfare when the mall off McLeod Street in central Dandenong mall opened in April 1991.

Palm Plaza - with its transplanted mature palm trees - was seen as a beacon of hope by retailers hoping to re-entice shoppers to the area.

The \$4.3 million development was envisaged as a pedestrian precinct between Dandenong Market, The Hub arcade and what was then Myer.

It was a city first at the time - a mall for shoppers to relax and stroll in a quiet landscaped area without traffic.

It was opened with a three-day festival of entertainment such as country-and-western, rock-and-roll and square dancing at The Hub, furry celebrities like Humphrey B Bear and Fat Cat ... and three days of Scrabble competitions on a giant Scrabble board.

At the time, David Phillips, of the Dandenong Chamber of Commerce and Industry, declared



it as part of the "resurgence of Dandenong".

Then-mayor Ian McDonald wrote in The Journal on the eve of Palm Plaza's opening: "Dandenong's future is looking very bright and exciting".

It enhanced what was the largest metropolitan retail and commercial area outside of Melbourne CBD, Cr McDonald wrote.

"Council realises that the (CBD) of the city is under increasing pressure from free standing shopping centres in close proximity to it and it therefore provide a different type of shopping experience in order to assist this continued prosperity."



The memorial plaque for Palm Plaza's opening. 185817

The City of Dandenong was also embarking on beautification works in Lonsdale Street, and examining improving safety and amenity in Foster Street, Thomas Street and "problem areas" like Dandenong railway station.

Cr McDonald forecast that the council wanted to have the general CBD area redeveloped.

Since then of course, part of Walker Street made way for what is now Armada Dandenong Plaza shopping centre, on the fringe of Palm Plaza.

And Dandenong was figuratively turned upside-down by Revitalising Central Dande-



A special lift-out in The Journal heralded the Palm Plaza's opening festival. 185817

nong works - with a radical makeover of Lonsdale Street and reconfiguration of the surrounds to Foster Street.

Since its opening, the exquisite diamond paving has suffered uplifting. In much the same way, the area has experienced ups and downs - such as Myer closing its doors five years ago.