

YARDS OF HISTORY

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■ Celebrations planned to mark the end of an era in Dandenong

GREATER Dandenong will celebrate its history as a market town with a series of spectacular events on September 4 and 5.

The celebrations for the stock and produce markets will start with a stockman's dinner dance at the Sandown Greyhound Racing Club on Friday, September 4 when the council will unveil an exhibition of their 132-year history.

The celebrations will continue on Saturday with a heritage street parade from the stockyards to the produce market, including historical re-enactments.

The celebrations will mark the end of one of Dandenong's



oldest institutions with the closure of the stockyards planned for October.

Until 1958 the stock and produce markets were one.

There are different accounts of when the market started, but the official opening is generally acknowledged as 1866.

The idea of a market was conceived in 1863 at one of the first meetings of the Dandenong

Improvement Association.

Since then the market has occupied four sites, being based in central Dandenong until 1958 when the stockyards broke away to move to Cheltenham Road.

The market may have changed sites many times, but it has always been popular, providing social contact for farmers from all over the country.

In its early years the nearby streets were cluttered with horses and drays, then cars.

For many it was the only chance to escape from the farm and socialise. Hotel dining rooms and boarding houses were always packed. Most of the visitors stayed until after dark before making their way back to

the bush.

The market played an important role during The Depression. Those lucky enough to get a stall had the chance to make a good life for themselves when unemployment was rife.

After World War II, Dandenong was becoming more urbanised.

People started complaining about the weekly intrusion in their streets with livestock trampling on lawns, damaging roads and paths and frightening women and children.

The first move to separate the produce and stock markets came in 1946 when the council appealed to the Premier for a grant to establish the saleyards

in Cheltenham Road near the railway. The overflow of the market into the showgrounds from 1949 accentuated the need for a grant and in 1955 the State Government provided £25,000 to build a new stock market.

Guests at the stockmans' dinner dance will be entertained by acclaimed jazz band Soul Sister Swing.

Former MLA for Dandenong Mr Terry Norris will give a poetry reading and there will be a spectacular fireworks display and an historic auction.

Tickets \$55 a person, \$100 a couple. Details from the council on 9239 5100.

● ALICE ARCHER'S market town tribute, pages 10-11