

BUSINESS SOUTH-EAST

Pirates mean life ain't Ezy

By CASEY NEILL

A VIDEO shop owner who is closing his store next month says video piracy has helped ruin his business and cost staff their jobs.

Lou Nanfra said shutting the door of Noble Park Video Ezy for the last time would be an emotional experience.

He's operated the Princes Highway movie rental store since 1983, but rising expenses and plummeting revenue have forced him to walk away.

"It was gut-wrenching," he said of making the decision.

"Not just for me but for everybody that works here."

"When the owner insisted on a five-year lease, even though he offered to cut the rent, I couldn't sign it.

"This industry is just about finished."

Mr Nanfra's last trading day will be 10 November. Rentals will finish on 25 October and his 20,000-plus DVDs and Blu-ray discs will then be for sale.

"There'll be lots of hard-to-get movies," he said.

The store has been in its current home since 2003.

"We grew out of the first store and moved in next door in '88," Mr Nanfra said.

"Then the owner had this empty block of land here and

asked me if he built a building for me would I move in.

"We've got lots of loyal customers that have been here since day one.

"I've seen lots of families grow up. Little children running around and playing with the toys, and now they've come back and are working for me.

"It's going to be really, really tough when we eventually close the doors forever.

"I had one customer that we told yesterday and he's a bit distraught.

"His 80-year-old mother can't download from the internet.

"She loves her movies. What's she going to do now?"

Mr Nanfra said a steady decline in the industry started about five years ago.

"We came through a hard time in the mid-'90s when Foxtel was introduced into the area. That took a fair chunk of business and it slowly came back," he said.

And Mr Nanfra said the move from VHS tapes to DVDs excited people again.

"The quality was much better, the sound and all that," he said.

"It was a better way to watch a movie than a tangled-up VHS tape."

But movie-watchers can now easily download movies at home, and then there's illegal copies.

"The piracy aspect is huge and it's only getting bigger," he said.

"People don't think that it's a crime, but when you look at these people now that are going to be out of work..."

Mr Nanfra's 12 staff were sad to hear the news, particularly his full-time store manager.

"He's been here 10 years," he said.

"He only moved into his new house 12 months ago.

"He loves the store. But he's seen it coming, the writing's been on the wall."

Mr Nanfra's not sure what life holds for him and wife Tracie Taylor next.

"I've been doing this for 30 years now, I don't really know anything else," he said.

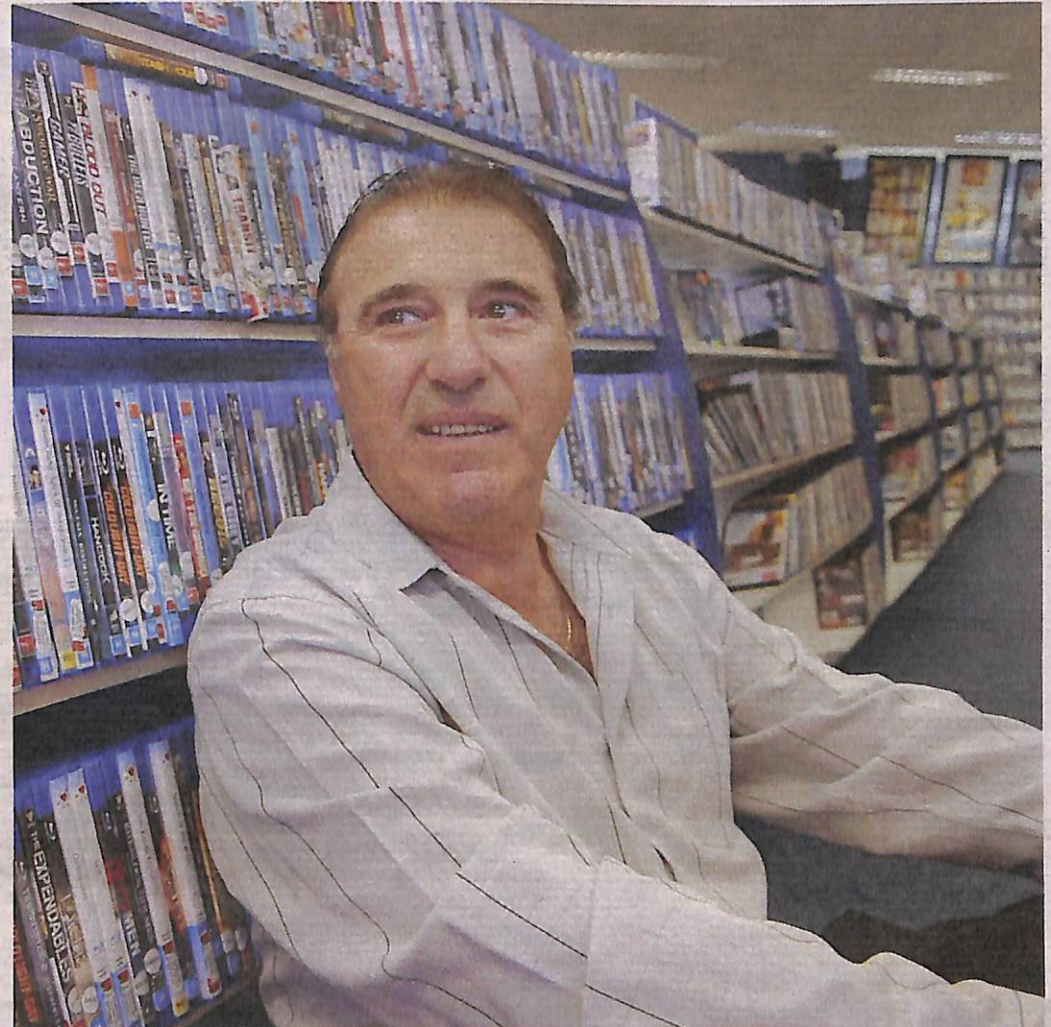
"My wife tells me I have to go out and get a job.

"Trying to get a job at my age is going to be a bit hard.

"But one door closes and another one opens.

"I'd love to thank the people of Noble Park for their support over the years.

"I've loved every minute of it. I wouldn't have done anything different."



Lou Nanfra will close his Noble Park video store next month. 107862 Picture: MEAGAN ROGERS