

DANDENONG PLAZA

Ray Carter

The opening of the new shopping complex on Wednesday July 26th, the Dandenong Plaza, was Dandenong's largest retail event for many years. The complex was formed by connecting the Myer store (constructed in 1972) to the Capital Centre, which had been built in 1989. In doing so, Walker Street was closed between McCrae and Clow Streets, and the Capital Centre building was enlarged and extensively renovated. There was a new Coles Supermarket, and the ground floor of the Myer store was separated from Myer to become a Target store. The Myer store itself was extensively renovated. Dandenong Plaza has three levels between Myer and Walker Street, and two levels elsewhere.

The Capital Centre multi-level carpark has been enlarged and its levels linked together more effectively with new ramps near Foster Street. Ground level car parking has been added between the Plaza and the RSL, and next to the Myer carpark. Part of Walker Street remains as an entrance to the Myer carpark and ground level parking.

Some of the businesses present in the old Capital Centre are no longer part of the Plaza. These include Tandy (now in Langhorne Street) and Roger David (no longer in Dandenong at all). Interestingly, one of the businesses seen as a feature of the Capital Centre - a tavern - is now absent. On the other hand, the Time Zone amusement centre, which presence in the Capital Centre was seen as controversial, has been enlarged.

An indication of the increase in the number of shoppers in Dandenong is the takings of the Coles Supermarkets (these figures are estimates only). Before the Plaza was opened, takings at the Coles supermarket located between Cleeland Street and the highway were about \$350,000 per week. After the Plaza opened, its takings dropped to about \$325,000 per week, but the takings of the new supermarket were about \$600,000 per week.

An undesirable feature of the Plaza's success has been the decline in retail activity in the rest of the Dandenong CBD, particularly on the western side of Lonsdale Street. For example, the Fossey's store site has been unoccupied since Fosseys closed in February, and is just one of a large number of vacant retail spaces.

Several businesses have relocated from the CBD including the RACV (from Thomas Street), the Bank of Melbourne and Target (both from Lonsdale Street), and Angus and Robertson (from the Hub Arcade). At this time, all former premises remain unused. The old Coles supermarket was to have been converted to become a "Bi-Lo" supermarket, but its success as a Coles supermarket and the leasing conditions on the property have prevented this from occurring.

CHANGING DANDENONG

GIPPSLAND GATE
JUNE 1995

The new Target Store under Myers opened in mid-May with its only entrance a "tunnel" from the Myer carpark. By the end of the month a few other stores had opened nearby: they were accessible from an entrance in Palm Plaza and also via a connection to the old Capital Centre.

The former Chandlers Store in Lonsdale Street became occupied by the second-hand dealer "Cash Converters" in mid-May. At the same time, the Department of Health and Community Services took over the former SEC building in Thomas Street.

The Bank of Melbourne relocated to Dandenong Plaza in June.