Subi's market star is reborn

By LLOYD GORMAN

Subiaco's former Pavilion Market opened exactly 41 years ago this weekend, recalled the man who helped make it a major Subiaco landmark after saving it from collapse.

Colin Nichol was among the crowd that flocked last Saturday to the new One Subiaco Markets launched on the redeveloped site of the original Rokeby Road market.

The Pavilion Market was a new concept in 1982 when Mr Nichol managed it for a syndicate who sold shares in the venture on the site of the Zimpels furniture warehouse.

But within a year it was on the brink of total failure before Mr Nichol turned it around with a bold marketing campaign.

"A lot of money was spent and there was nothing left for me when I came into the office to start running the place," he said.

"No advertising money, nothing.

"I had to scrape together what I could from the tenants to keep the whole operation running until about 10 months or a year later when it was starting to fail badly.

"It was very hard to hold on to the tenants and I realised the directors had no money and they had taken off and were nowhere to be found.

"They didn't come around at all because it looked as though they were in for a hiding.

"I reached into my own pocket and spent nearly $10,000 on an advertising campaign – which I designed and wrote myself – using mixed media, including the POST.

Paul Blackburne, left, and mayor David McMullen open the One Subiaco Market.

"A week later we were practically trampled underfoot."

The resurgence coincided with the reopening of the Perth-Fremantle railway line which made it easier for people to travel to Subiaco.

Mr Nichol recalled the opening was attended by a dozen people, including the then mayor Richard Diggins who was also at the One Subiaco launch last Saturday.

"My prediction always was that Subiaco, Rokeby Road, would fade away if the market did," he said. "And it did."

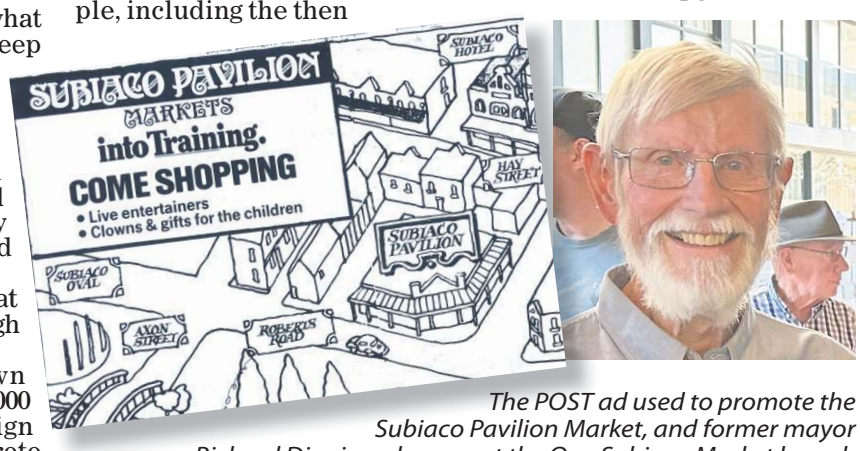
Rokeby Road and the CBD were now making a comeback and if the markets could survive and he said become a regular fixture they would bring more people into the area.

A successful market could "operate organically ... and make things happen itself," he said.

"The secret of good management is to lead from the ground up, to listen to them and work with them.

"Tenants are on the floor where things happen and I've had some successful ideas, but most of them have been given to me by the tenants."

Subiaco mayor David McMullen officially opened the new markets and the $3million Seddon Street upgrade.



The POST ad used to promote the Subiaco Pavilion Market, and former mayor Richard Diggins who was at the One Subiaco Market launch last Saturday 41 years after he attended the original market opening.

Colin Nichol kept the original Pavilion Market going when it was on the verge of collapse. **Photos: Lloyd Gorman**

"For many years Seddon Street was just a tired piece of bitumen but now we see it with new life, it's still a carpark, it's still a road but it's also a versatile space," he said.

Mr McMullen said the physical transformation was also a metaphor for the resurgence of Subiaco.

Developer Paul Blackburne lived across the road from the markets for several years and visited them often.

But when his company bought the property for $25million in 2018, the markets were long gone.

"In reality it was a dead site, it was shut for five years, covered in posters and graffiti and that really ripped the heart and soul out of Subi," Mr Blackburne said.

"It was always the life force and centre of Subi ... when we bought the site it had been shut down for many years and part of the vision we had was to bring back that vibrancy."

About 500 people had worked on the project over five years, he said, while about 500 people moved into One Subiaco earlier this year.

The markets will be held again on the first Saturdays of November and December.

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