

The Concourse, Chatswood's \$171m big heart

by Jane Rowley

Artarmon and other Willoughby City residents will soon have their first opportunity to view The Concourse, Willoughby City Council's \$171m redevelopment in the heart of the Chatswood commercial district.

A community open day will be held on Saturday, September 10 as part of the StreetFair. Members of the public are invited to see inside the 1,000-seat concert hall, 500-seat theatre and 5,000sq m state of the art library.

WCC acting general manager Greg Woodhams predicts residents will be delighted with the results. "We wanted to have a heart and soul in Chatswood and we've delivered on a big heart and a whole lot of soul," he told the *Artarmon Gazette*.

In addition to the library, concert hall and theatre, the site also boasts a civic pavilion, studio, rehearsal rooms, an orchestra room and art space together with retail and dining facilities.

According to Woodhams, the biggest challenge was fitting everything on the wish list onto the site. "The expectations of our community were so enormous with relation to this site but we rose to the challenge," he said. "It's on budget and on time and the delivery of the product is outstanding. The builders and project managers have done a fantastic job to bring this extraordinary venture to completion."

Another challenge was equipping a library that was almost three times the size of the original. The new Chatswood library will be one of the biggest in Australia and features separate study areas, meeting rooms, training facilities and a multilingual collection in more than 10 languages.

State of the art library technologies, including self-checkouts and an



The Concourse... at heart of community

automated sorting system, will free staff from some time-consuming and tedious tasks, enabling them to interact more with library users.

But spending money on all this technology does not mean the collection will be on the lean side. "Over time we've been putting money away in reserve under 'book stock' so that when it's opened there's not going to be five books on the shelf," Woodhams said.

Much effort has also been applied to ensure the green credentials of the site, including the integration of one of Australia's biggest stormwater reclamation systems. Up to 5ML water can be stored on site and will be used throughout The Concourse for grey water purposes.

When first proposed, and in the initial stages of development, the council bore criticism in relation to costing and project management. However, Woodhams is confident critics will find little to exploit. "I think the critics played an important role in driving us to succeed in this

project," he said. "They had a legitimate right to say to council, 'prove to us that this going to work'. I think we've shown that we were able to bring the whole of the package together very successfully."

NSW Governor, Prof Marie Bashir will officially open The Concourse on Saturday, September 17, at 4:30pm. ■

Inside

Letters to the editor	page 2
A note from the president	page 3
Artarmon@Council	page 4
School builds winning community	page 5
Artarmon resident celebrates 100	page 6
Burning matters	page 7
Amazing Stories:	
Artarmon Post Office	page 8
APA needs your help	
on history project	page 9
Gardening	page 11
Councillors' feedback	page 12
Artarmon SES volunteer	
on winning team	page 14
Talking 2064	page 14
Sustainability Street	page 15