

Council gives \$25m go-ahead to perk up Paradise

Surfers set for facelift surgery

by Geoff Chambers, council reporter

IMAGINE a tree-laden foreshore, complete with a world-class entertainment precinct and a boardwalk to match.

For more years than we would all like to remember, tourists and locals alike have been complaining about the state of the Surfers Paradise foreshore.

After years of dithering by the Gold Coast City Council and a lack of funding support from the State Government, *The Bulletin* can today reveal what the heart of our city will look like after it finally receives its facelift.

Council sources have told *The Bulletin* the redeveloped \$25 million foreshore area will run from View Avenue to Clifford Street.

The revamped foreshore will comprise three distinct zones – an urban plaza, urban beach and urban park.

The urban plaza is the central area, consisting of a 20m wide pedestrian promenade and bikeway, with seating and a shared vehicular and pedestrian zone.

The urban zone will include terraces, ramps and stairs leading to the beach.

The urban park zones will incorporate grassed areas, picnic tables, barbecues and beach shelters.

The existing Eileen Peters Park will be upgraded to integrate with the new promenade.

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Beach towers and viewing decks will be located at either end of the Esplanade.

Other features include new toilets, lifeguard towers, beach showers, bike racks and lockers.

Assisted by a financial boost in the council's \$120 million stimulus package, the project is now expected to be accelerated.

Surfers Paradise councillor Susie Douglas, who lobbied hard to secure funding for the project,

said the foreshore redevelopment had been a long time coming.

Soul developer Juniper is pushing ahead with its beautification of the rundown Esplanade strip in front of its giant luxury tower.

Cr Douglas said works would begin as soon as practically possible.

"We have to work around the major events like Indy and Schoolies and also ensure we follow the seasons so

the bulk of the work can be continued," said Cr Douglas.

"The original vision to incorporate the entire Surfers Paradise strip in the foreshore redevelopment, has been hampered by a council lease agreement with Centro shopping centres.

"Centro has so far been intransigent during negotiations to incorporate their site in the overall vision.

"There is a lease agreement between the council and Centro so I'll be asking

questions about how we can get around any of the delays."

Surfers Paradise Alliance chairman Graeme Downie last night told *The Bulletin* he believed the waterfront should be better utilised.

"I think everybody has for a long time identified that Surfers Paradise needs a facelift and we're very pleased that work has progressed on the Soul and Hilton developments," said Mr Downie.

"The foreshore redevelopment is a great first step.



An artist's impression of the new and improved Surfers Paradise foreshore

State debt rating cut as deficit blows out

by Ken Vernon

A SECOND international ratings agency has downgraded Queensland's debt rating from AAA to AA1 in a move the Opposition says should ring alarm bells in the Government.

Moody's rating agency said Queensland's jump in borrowings was not consistent with its triple-A rating.

"Significant reductions in coal royalties are now anticipated to contribute to weaker Budget outcomes," Moody's said. "As a result, the state is expected to produce a series of very large, recurring deficits."

Queensland had already been heading into deficit before global recession struck, it said, due to rapid spending growth and an ambitious \$54 billion capital works program.

Queensland is expected to be among the first states to take advantage of a recent offer by the Federal Government to guarantee state borrowings and Moody's said it would re-assess the state's rating if it took up the guarantee.

The benchmark Standard and Poor's rating agency cut Queensland's ratings to AA+ from AAA in February.

Premier Anna Bligh discounted the development, saying Moody's was just "another ratings agency making the same conclusion".

"It is absolutely clear from the rating agency's statement today that our Government needs to do exactly what we are doing with this year's Budget: make tough decisions," she said.

"We are ready to make those decisions, but we are equally clear that those decisions will not involve mass job cuts and it will not involve mass cuts to our infrastructure program."

Opposition Leader John-Paul Langbroek noted the Premier had not ruled out job cuts in next month's Budget.