



An artist's impression gives residents and traders an idea of what the revamped Surfers Paradise foreshore will look like

# Hope and fear amid plans for paradise

by Leah Fineran

**PLANS** to transform the Surfers Paradise foreshore into a new tourist attraction have been met with hope and fear by locals and traders.

The \$25 million redevelopment has been touted as the saving grace for the tourism heart's tired public image, but some shopkeepers and residents fear construction will turn visitors away before the project is completed.

Hundreds of curious on-lookers crowded around the council's beachfront display at the weekend to check out the proposal and have their say

during the community consultation phase.

Surfers resident Dinny Birang gave the plans his cautious approval.

"I want to have a closer look but my first impression is positive," he said.

"It's about time the council did something to clean up this area for tourists and locals."

Traders fear more construction on top of the 77-storey Soul tower site on The Esplanade and the Hilton Hotel site in Orchid Avenue will discourage visitors.

They have already endured 12 months of hardship with the economic crisis, swine flu and a decline in visitor numbers.

Market stallholders said they feared they would be pushed out by a lack of traffic and support from the council.

Sarah Richards said many people had already left the markets before the situation could deteriorate.

"It's become too hard for some, with council restrictions and the uncertainty of what will happen to us during construction," she said.

Construction will be in stages but local councillor Susie Douglas said disruption to traffic, the Surfers Paradise markets and big events including Schoolies, were inevitable.

The Juniper Group will begin foreshore works in front

of the Soul development this month and the council will start preliminary work of its site next January.

Cr Douglas said the traders had supported the project during conception and it would be worth putting up with the pain.

"It is going to be a huge boost for Surfers Paradise and will polish the jewel in the Gold Coast's crown and that's what we have to keep our focus on," she said. "It will be worth it in the end."

Cr Douglas said locals would be encouraged to come down to Cavill Mall during construction and an interactive display would give visitors an inside view into the work.