

Coles Cudgen rings alarms

DN 22.10.05

Farmers and residents fear loss of land to major shopping centre

By PETER CATON

"WELCOME to Coles Cudgen".

That could be the message Kingscliff shoppers are hearing over in-store loudspeaker systems on land which once grew the type of vegetables and fruit now offered for sale.

Or will they?

The very prospect of a major

shopping centre on the western outskirts of Kingscliff has rung alarm bells among farmers and some residents.

A \$4.5 million dollar mortgage provided by supermarket and department store giant Coles Myer over Cudgen farmland has reignited speculation the NSW Government is about to come under renewed pressure to allow devel-

opment there.

Although the red-soil land on the corner of Cudgen and Tweed Coast Roads, west of the Kingscliff TAFE campus, has not been farmed for years, it is zoned 'prime agricultural' and has been designated as protected farmland by the NSW Government.

The Coles Myer interest in the land is revealed in a mortgage document dated November last year which a rival developer, Gales Holdings, claims indicates the retail giant hopes to build a shopping centre.

Gales director Dr Stephen Segal has warned the farmland is bound to become the location of Kingscliff's next major shopping centre if it is not built on the site of the present sewerage treatment plant he is buying from Tweed Shire Council.

But council planning has ruled out any new shopping centre. A draft retail strategy presented to council administrators says while potential for a new supermarket exists in Kingscliff, current coastal shopping centres should expand as demand requires and no new major centres should be established.

Instead Tweed Heads South should remain the major

shopping precinct.

The Cudgen farmland has been the focus of a development row since the mid-1990s when the Anglican Church failed in an attempt to build a private school near the TAFE campus.

Council administrator Max Boyd, who as mayor in the late '90s led opposition to the land being developed, said it appeared "someone has speculated on a change in government and a change in policy".

Under current policy, he said, "the land is not able to be used for anything other than agriculture and can't be subdivided."

"It is probably some of the best agricultural land in Australia."

But he warned the public should "be ever-vigilant" to ensure the policy was not overturned. "If you stand firm I don't believe even money can overturn it, but in the end it all comes back to politics," he said.

Cudgen landowner Alan McIntosh, who fought against the rezoning of the area as prime agricultural arguing it was too rocky, said the site had not been farmed for "10 to 15 years" and he still believed properties east of the Tweed Coast Road should be

developed.

He said he had not heard of the Coles Myer interest.

Neighbouring landholder Cathy Prichard whose family farms their own 16 hectares as well as leased property said they had tried to buy more land but couldn't match the prices being offered.

She said it was "disgusting" so much land was now growing weeds when properties "on both sides" were being productively farmed.

Kingscliff Ratepayers and Progress Association president Pete Gladwin said his members wanted the land forever kept as farmland.

"It has a second use of stopping the urban sprawl that has covered South East Queensland," he added.

The mortgage document lists Coles Myer as the mortgagee and the Kingscliff Land Company, which has admitted the land will need to be rezoned for development, as mortgagor.

The site includes about 48 hectares which the Kingscliff Land Company bought from Mrs Ena Robertson, mother of former pro-development mayor Lynne Beck, for \$9.5 million in June last year.

A Coles Myer spokesperson was unable to comment.



□ MATEY Prichard, Carl Redman, Dallas Robinson, Cathy Prichard, Jerry Cornford, Terry Cleal and Pete Gladwin at the disputed site on the outskirts of Kingscliff. D94271a