

## Farmers chase sweet deal on land



Greg Zipf says farmers can't turn a profit on their Jacobs Well farms

# Houses for canefields

by Lucy Ardern

**PRESSURE** is mounting for the State Government to change its policy on 9000ha of farm land north of the Gold Coast with the region's booming population running out of places to go.

The area around Jacobs Well, used for growing cane, has been declared a development no-go zone by the the Government despite farmers struggling for years to make an income.

Housing development is not the only idea for the largest parcel of land that remains on the coast.

Other suggestions include setting it aside for a koala sanctuary, turning it into a large-scale canal development, using it for industrial and mining purposes, and further developing the sporting and recreational facilities that are already there.

Midwood Queensland Investment Report author Bill Morris identified the area as the only significant pocket of land that could be developed on the Gold Coast for affordable housing.

"The problem is that the state government and the council have this idea that we should only encourage development in existing areas," he said.

"This area around Jacobs Well, Pimpama, Norwell and Ormeau has been quarantined from development."

The area is protected because of the State Government's position on not developing 'good quality agricultural

land', but Rocky Point Future Planning Association Incorporated spokesperson Greg Zipf said there was no future for the area in growing cane or any other crop.

"All of our costs have continued to rise and when the price of cane comes back down it will not be viable for anyone except the big growers to keep producing here," he said.

Canegrowers Rocky Point chairman Richard Skopp agrees with Mr Zipf's negative assessment of the future, saying the amount of cane Rocky Point Sugar Mill was crushing had dropped 100,000 tonnes in about 10 years.

"The only thing we can grow here is cane and that is not even very good. It was a political decision to lock the land up," he said.

Mr Zipf said the group had been battling for more than three years to try to get through to the State Government.

"It has been a difficult road, but we believe the State Government is aware of the issues and we are hopeful that its position will change," he said.

"This area of land could be the answer to the Gold Coast's development problems."

Mr Zipf listed a raft of development possibilities for the area and said many of them could be accommodated in the sizeable space.

Member for Coomera Michael Crandon said he was developing a discussion paper about the future possibilities for the area.