



Kenny in bid to develop airport

By **DAMIAN BATHERSBY**

SUNSHINE Coast businessman Grant Kenny has thrown his hat into the ring with a consortium hoping to develop an industrial aviation hub and residential complex in northern NSW.

The ironman legend, former Olympian and head of Curry Kenny Aviation is part of a group headed by fellow aviator and Waratah Coal managing director Peter Lynch which hopes to buy and redevelop the Evans Head Aerodrome in a deal worth millions of dollars.

Richmond Valley Council called for expressions of interest in developing a residential airpark at the heritage-listed site and the consortium's proposal was one of three received when submissions closed earlier this month.

Mr Kenny said while the project was still in its early stages, key components of the group's bid in-

cluded commercial sites and 60 residential homes with hangars and direct access to runways.

Mr Kenny said the aim was to provide a centre for aviation-based businesses at a time when other facilities were being restricted and even squeezed out by rapidly growing populations.

"There is a great deal of uncertainty surrounding existing airport facilities and major issues facing the aviation industry in terms of access to airports," he said.

"We are all well aware of the issues at Caloundra (with proximity to residential developments) and cost issues at places like Maroochydore.

"There are significant issues facing businesses at Archerfield and Bankstown as well, so if you are in the industry you start to look around and ask 'where can I

afford to be?'. Basically, aviation businesses are being squeezed out of most existing airports and so we see a need in future for more certainty for people."

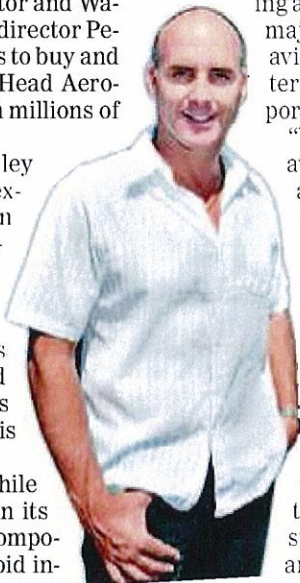
Aircraft maintenance, refurbishment and even manufacturing were among the industries which could be established at the site, Mr Kenny said.

A boutique motel, convention centre and camping area were also planned.

One of the big attractions was the extensive runway, built when the aerodrome was an RAAF base during the Second World War.

"Obviously it will cost in the millions of dollars. It's not the sort of thing you do for hundreds of thousands," Mr Kenny said.

To acknowledge the significant role the aerodrome played in the training of RAAF pilots during the war, the group is proposing a museum be built on the site, with the initial focus being a remaining Bellman Hangar which would be restored. An F-111 fighter bomber would also be displayed once the RAAF decommissioned the aircraft next year.





UP FOR GRABS: An aerial view of Evans Head Airport.

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