

Guilty plea to Tweed slaying

By **DARREN COYNE**
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A FORMER Australian soldier yesterday pleaded guilty to the gangland-style killing of Chinderah brothel owner Victor Roderick Elliot seven years ago.

Mike Anthony Grupe, 33, appeared at the Lismore Local Court via video-link from a Sydney jail, charged with murder, kidnap and assault.

Grupe, who was extradited from Queensland last year where he had been in jail since 2003 for armed robbery and firearms offences, will now be sentenced in the NSW Supreme Court at a date to be fixed.

With the admission of guilt yesterday, further details of the police investigation into the killing emerged involving stolen weapons and a vehicle from the Lavarack Army barracks in Townsville, the planning of a \$500,000 kidnapping of Elliot, and the description of Elliot as a drug dealer by a former colleague of one of the killers.

Among eight files of evidence compiled by detectives from Strike Force Rathmullen, a summary of facts written by detective chief inspector Malcolm Lanyon of the Homicide Squad details the lead-up to Elliot's death, and the subsequent fall-out between his two killers, Grupe and Dayal Gary Utz, who Grupe subsequently shot and killed in March 2003.

At the time of Victor Elliot's murder in 2000, he was the chief radiographer at the Tweed Heads Hospital, a position he had held for 25 years. Aged just 50 years old, he was in the process of establishing a brothel in competition to a former business associate, Daniel Scott.

Ballina bucks state trend

The property slump may be drawn out, but Ballina's still sitting pretty

By **MARY MANN**
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DEVELOPERS state-wide are gritting their teeth fearing the residential property slump will last longer than initially predicted - but at Ballina, it's a very different story.

Residential development in the coastal town is defying the trend. It's actually getting stronger.

Property researcher Terry Ryder says Ballina is in a good position to continue to outperform the overall market.

"Ballina will always stand out from the crowd," Mr Ryder, director of hotspotting.com.au, said.

A combination of affordability, the sea-change movement and infrastructure improvements are what makes building and buying in Ballina so appealing, he said.

"It's a good buying area and people are realising that."

After 20 years in the industry, town planner Steve Connelly said it was business as usual in the Ballina, Lennox Head and Byron Bay areas, with planning underway for at least 12 big residential developments.

"We're not experiencing a property slump here," Mr Connelly said.

"I've been kept busy. This area is attractive - it doesn't get any better in terms of amenity."

Mr Ryder recently listed Ballina in his Top 12 NSW property hotspots and expects the area to experience significant population growth over the next couple of years.

Mr Ryder said transport infrastructure was the key catalyst for growth in residential markets, and that upgrades to



HEALTHY MARKET: Steve Connelly talks with Mary Mann about developments in the area. Picture: GEMMA-ROSE TURNBULL.

the Pacific Highway as well as the Ballina and Tugun by-passes were making building and buying in Ballina more attractive.

"Property investors should look most closely at transport infrastructure," he said. "Regional areas with major new transport infrastructure will benefit from improved links and decreased travelling times."

But elsewhere in the state, developers are saying building activity will probably not pick up for at least another few years.

Various high-profile developers were last year hoping for an improvement in the residential housing market by

late 2007 or early 2008.

However, according to The Sydney Morning Herald, they face the reality the recovery will not happen until at least 2009.

The article stated that Lend Lease Corp, a major participant in the real estate investment management and property development industries, told analysts it expected the east coast residential market would remain soft for another 18 months before gradually recovering.

It said Lend Lease was predicting a peak in the cycle by 2010 and expected the worst was over but that recovery would be slow because of low housing affordability.

Lennox Head developments

■ **ELEVATION:** The new residential subdivision at Lennox Head is set on 46 hectares along North Creek Road. It will create 116 new home sites, with the first being released in early July.

allows for 654 homes in a village-style subdivision, including a village centre, car parking, and a proposed tavern site.

■ **PETRAC:** The Pacific Pines Estate. Plans for the 92-hectare site include retirement housing. The plan

■ **SURVEY STREET: SAKE** Developments has sought approval through the NSW Department of Planning for a 45-lot Coastal Grove residential development.



ARTIST'S impression of Seagrass Ocean Shores.

Big boom is on for Ocean Shores

By **MARY MANN**
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OCEAN Shores is soon to experience a boom in population growth with the development of a \$24m residential village.

Building has started on the landmark Seagrass development project at Ocean Shores, north of Byron Bay.

Ware Building is constructing the project, which will comprise 16 architecturally

designed dwellings in a village, located between the surf beach and Ocean Shores' championship golf course.

Designed by the acclaimed Australian coastal and landscape architectural practice of Stephen and Nanna Lesiuk, the development has an emphasis on indoor/outdoor living, complete with native landscaping. Interiors will be finished with natural materials such as timber flooring,

limestone and ceramics.

Many of the villas feature outdoor rooms and seven have their own plunge pools.

Seagrass has been designed to incorporate the latest environmentally sustainable principles, with water and power conservation features contributing to its five-star energy efficiency rating.

The development is expected to be completed in early 2008.

Byron Bay

- **BAYSHORE DRIVE:** Bayshore Property Trust has an application for a mixed-living development,
- **BELONGIL FIELDS:** There are plans to turn the Belongil Fields site into a residential estate.
- **BECTON:** Stage one includes 117 units on the 89ha development at Belongil Byron Bay Beach Resort. Work is expected to start before the end of the year.

Ballina

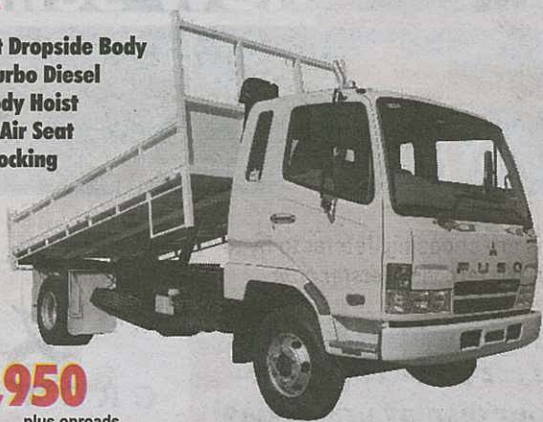
- **NORTH ANGELS BEACH:** Developer Chris Condon plans to build 63 houses and 125 units on the site.
- **CUMBALUM EXTENSIONS:** One hundred and sixty-five houses have been built at Cumbalum since the project started in 2003. Another 750 dwellings are expected to be built by 2015, with about 10,000 people expected to be living in the area by 2025. The project will include a shopping centre, industrial work centres and parks.

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