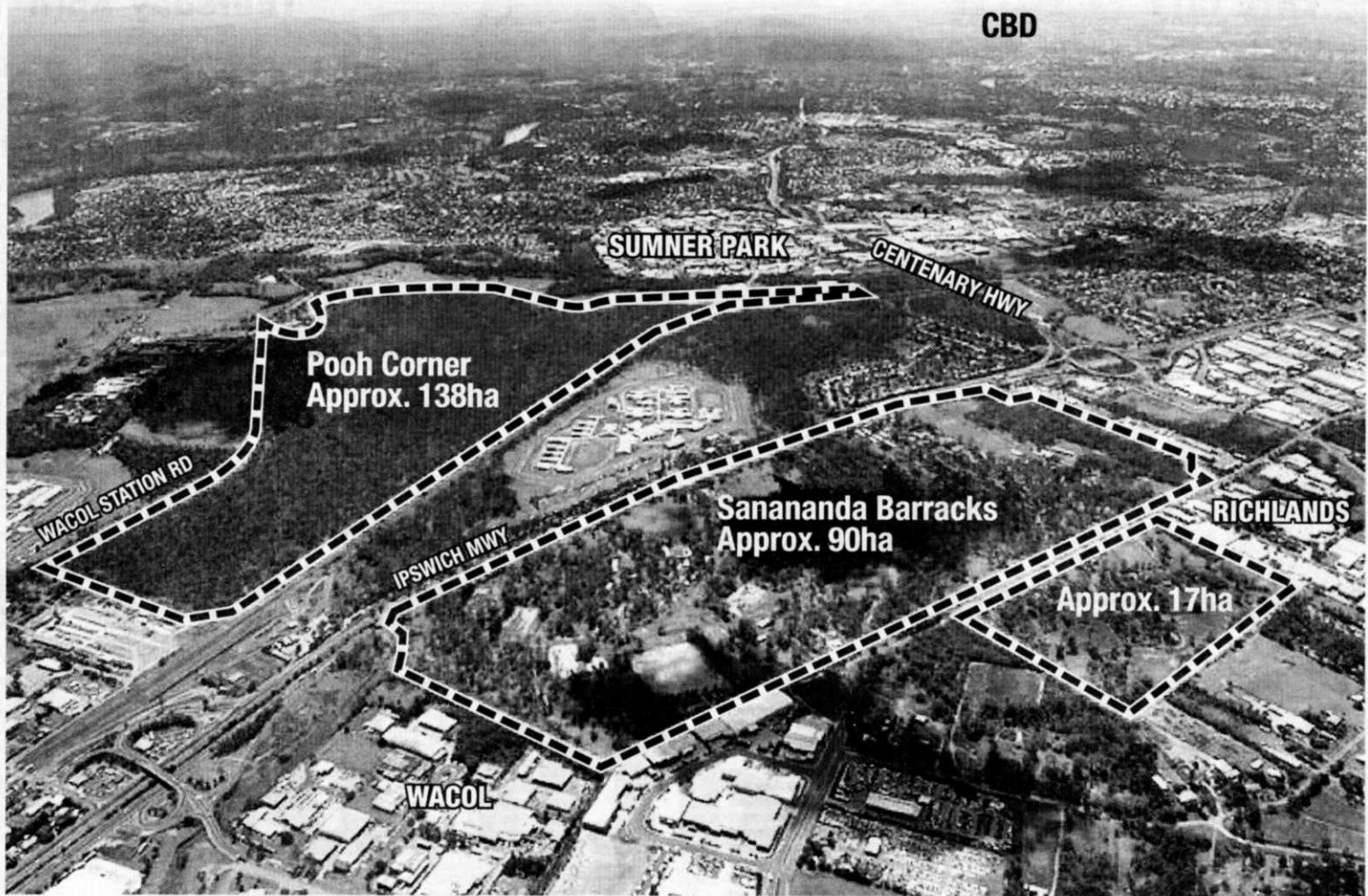


Land sell-off too much to bear



Steven Wardill

CONTROVERSIAL Department of Defence plans to sell off sensitive Brisbane bushland known as Pooh Corner to developers are causing a stink in Coalition ranks.

Liberal Member for Ryan Michael Johnson has written to Defence Parliamentary Secretary Teresa Gambaro with a list of community concerns and highlighting the need for greater consultation.

It comes as the Department of Defence has also been condemned for taking extraordinary steps to gag local environmentalists.

The *Courier-Mail* has learned the Friends of Pooh Corner group was forced to sign legal documents preventing them going public with concerns about material being distributed to potential developers.

The revelations have widened the controversy surrounding the Defence fire sale of Pooh



LETTER about land row ... local MP Michael Johnson.

Corner and two other Wacol properties.

Proposed industrial developments on the sites have been criticised because of the impact they may have on the environment and the congested Ipswich Motorway.

Mr Johnson yesterday confirmed he had written to Ms

Gambaro at the urging of constituents but refused to divulge the details.

It is understood the letter supports postponing the sale of the publicly owned land and holding a round of community consultation about its future.

Tenders for the sale, which is being marketed by prominent property agent Jones Lang LaSalle, close on April 27.

But Friends of Pooh Corner spokeswoman Nikki Parker confirmed the group had been unable to reveal concerns about the sale process.

She said the group's reservations centred on an attempt by the Defence Department to overturn a ban on clearing the site because of endangered remnant vegetation laws.

The *Courier-Mail* revealed the bid to overturn the ban yesterday and the State Government's scepticism of its credibility.

"The information about the reclassification was only made available to potential developers

at a cost \$100," she said. "Community groups had to lobby to get access to the information free of charge."

Opposition infrastructure spokesman Bernie Ripoll said the Government had botched the process and its suspicious actions showed it had something to hide.

"I am not opposed to progress but what I want is proper processes conducted in regard to consultation," he said.

Last night, Ms Gambaro said Mr Johnson's requests for consultation would be considered by an evaluation panel after tenders close.

She defended the decision to force the environment group to sign a secrecy clause as the information was "commercial-in-confidence".

"In signing, the organisation in receipt of the information is agreeing that the information has only been provided to assist purchasers in assessing the property," she said.