

Bay of Plenty Times Weekend



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New private school for Bay

Education facility catering for up to 700 students is planned on 14-ha block in Pyes Pa



A PRIVATE school catering for up to 700 students is planned to be built on a 14-ha block in Pyes Pa opposite Tauranga Cemetery.

The purchase of the kiwifruit orchard on Pyes Pa Rd earlier this year represents the first venture outside of Auckland for ACG Group's New Zealand operation. It owns and operates seven independent schools in Auckland.

Chief executive Ian King said Tauranga was at the heart of a fast-growing and desirable region and the plan was to eventually offer pre-school to secondary education.

The site occupied most of the land between the Four14 Espresso cafe and the corner of Keenan Rd.

It will eventually have residential development almost to its doorstep once The Lakes extended up to the Pyes Pa Bypass roundabout. Two hundred hectares of land behind the site was also earmarked for future residential development.

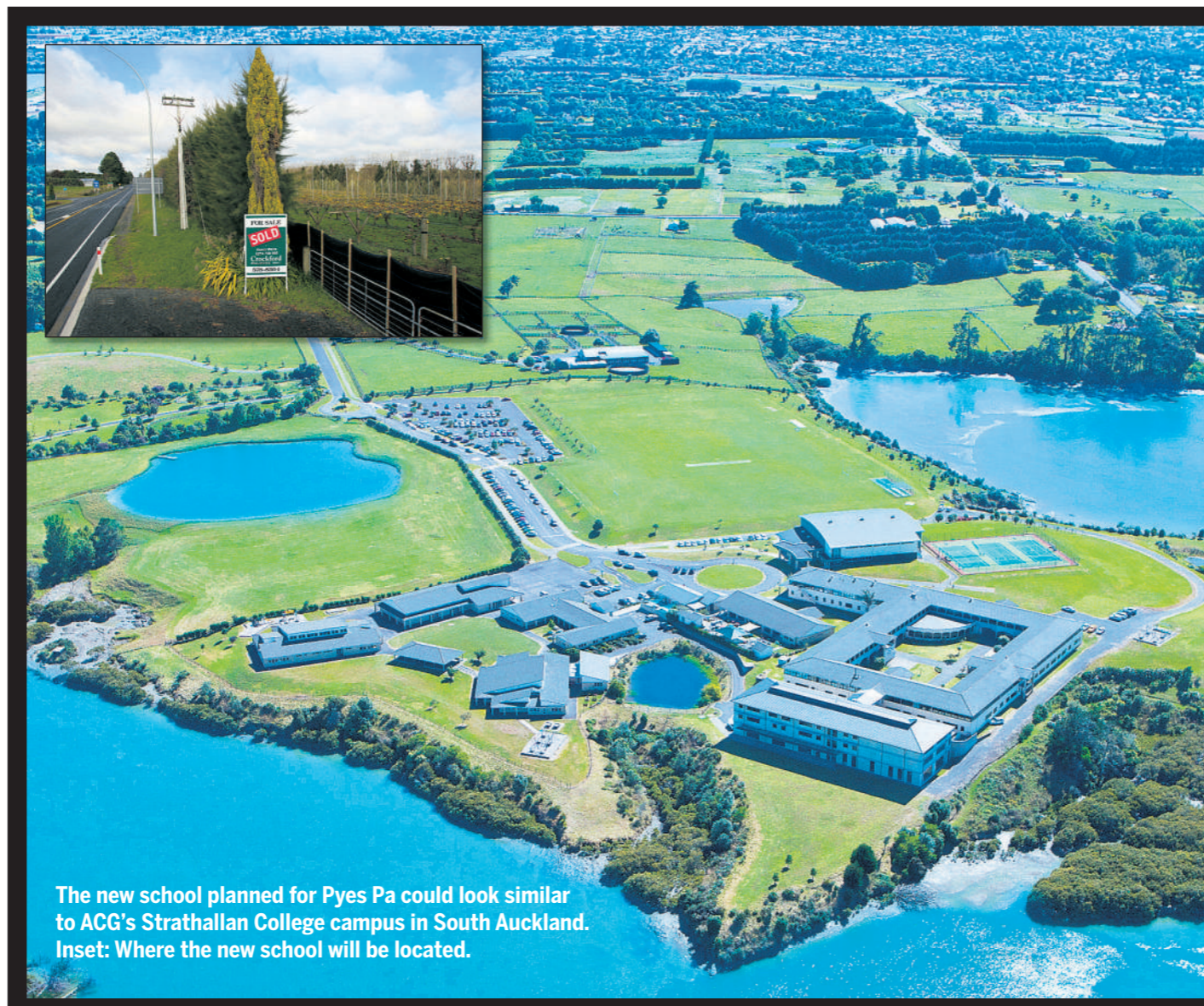
Nearby resident Glenn Wilson said he welcomed the school into the rural community: "It will liven the place up. It will be a good thing for our community."

He said The Lakes was taking off again and a new school would be good for the area.

"It's the way things are going, it will give people more choice."

No fees had been set for the school but annual fees at ACG's Strathallan College established in 2001 on a 14-ha greenfield site in Papakura were \$13,250 for Year 1-6 students, \$15,490 for Year 7-10 students and \$16,340 for Year 11-13 students. Pre-school for 3-5 year olds ranged from \$1170 for one day a week per year to \$7390 for five days a week.

Mr King said ACG was developing the plans and documents needed to lodge a resource consent application



The new school planned for Pyes Pa could look similar to ACG's Strathallan College campus in South Auckland. Inset: Where the new school will be located.

with the Western Bay of Plenty District Council later this year.

Ideally, ACG would have liked a "soft opening" of primary and possibly Year 7 by January 2014, but that was beyond their control and depended on the consenting process and building programme, he said.

They were initially aiming to attract

students from Tauranga and, over time, take pupils from the wider Bay of Plenty.

Mr King said ACG schools were co-educational and secular and being independent meant they were neither integrated schools and nor would they be charter schools.

"We have large schools in South

Auckland and Vietnam. ACG has programmes for international students in co-operation with the University of Auckland and AUT, schools for senior students, an international school in Jakarta and we have purchased land in Bali for a school."

He said the number of overseas students at the new school would likely

be small because the Bay of Plenty had only 3.6 per cent of New Zealand's international students. The long-term plan was for the school to cater for boarders.

Mr King said independent schools had declined in the global downturn as parents struggled to know what their future incomes would be, but recently

Academic Colleges Group (ACG)

- Plans to build a private school catering for up to 700 students in Pyes Pa
- Operates seven schools in New Zealand, two in Vietnam and one in Indonesia
- Has over 5,000 students and 500 teaching staff
- Is associated with the University of Cambridge through international examinations
- Teaches University Foundation Studies on behalf of Auckland University and AUT
- Has advanced IT services for learning on-line and for families to view attendance, academic reports and examination results
- All schools achieved a 99% or 100% (E or better) in A Levels
- Students achieved 31 Cambridge International Awards and 32 NCEA scholarships
- Began in 1994 from the idea of having a senior school for Auckland fashioned on the best international models



WHAT DO YOU THINK?

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Inside

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- A16: Editorial

ACG had begun to see new growth. "We promote values of scholarship, acceptance of diversity, international understanding and creativity."

Western Bay of Plenty District Council consents manager Chris Watt had preliminary discussions a couple of years ago in which ACG scoped its ideas for a school in Pyes Pa.

He said any consent application would include issues of reverse sensibility in which the school would have to accommodate the effects of living in a rural orcharding environment.

An interested party would be the New Zealand Transport Agency because the school would be built beside SH 36.

In the meantime, the Ministry of Education has yet to lodge an application with the Tauranga City Council to designate land it owns in Pyes Pa West for a new school.

The site sits at the end of the old portion of Kennedy Rd, right on the boundary with The Lakes.

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