

Residents have to wait

Court action against development

By Meredith Clisby

GIRALANG residents are set to wait even longer for a local centre after a legal challenge was launched in the Supreme Court opposing the approval of the development.

While the local residents group claims the court action is another blow to the Belconnen suburb, one of the challenging parties says it is a battle for family and independent businesses in the area.

Last week the ACT Government also agreed to carry out an inquiry into the Territory's supermarket competition policy.

While it will examine the suitability of the Giralang proposal it will mainly investigate the broader application and use of the current competition policy.

In August Planning Minister Simon Corbell used his call-in powers to approve the latest development application for the Giralang site saying it would provide certainty for local residents.

The approved application includes a 1500sqm supermarket, retail outlets, a cafe, restaurant and car parking.

The Giralang shops have stood vacant since 2004 and residents have long complained about vandalism and trespassing on the site.

While the community welcomed Mr Corbell's decision, local shop owners threatened legal action over what they saw as an overdevelopment of the site.

Now some Belconnen supermarket owners and a residents group are challenging the approval in the Supreme Court and a directions hearing was set for

Tuesday, September 27. Approvals using call-in powers can not be appealed in the ACT Administrative and Appeals Tribunal.

Giralang Residents Action Group spokesman Peter Nolan said the group was not surprised but still disappointed by the appeal.

He said it had nothing to do with supermarket or planning processes but was just to protect the commercial interests of current business owners, not the interests of local residents.

Mr Nolan said Giralang residents had expressed relief when the development had been approved by Minister Corbell last month.

They are now angry the derelict site will remain in place for a potentially lengthy court process.

"We're getting used to disappointment in Giralang," Mr Nolan said.

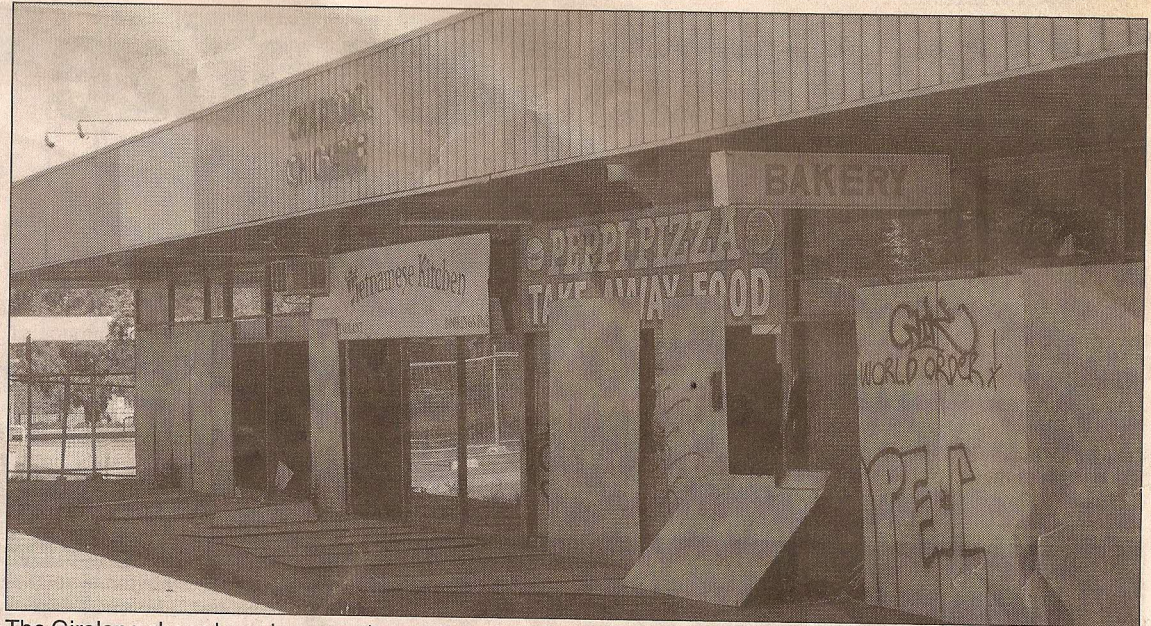
However, Kaleen IGA co-owner Chris Haridemos said a legal challenge had been lodged because the Giralang approval would set a dangerous precedent for all centres in Canberra.

He said it was not about denying Giralang residents a local centre but making sure it was a suitable size.

Mr Haridemos said under economic assessments other local supermarkets would not survive if the approved Giralang development went ahead.

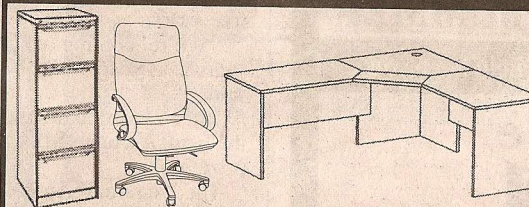
"We would not be able to maintain viability to survive if a Coles or Woolworths moved next door," he said.

"This is about family run business being threatened by a major retailer moving into our backyard."



The Giralang shops have become the subject of a Supreme Court challenge after retailers lodged action against the decision to approve the most recent plan.

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