

Hello world, it's 'Cloud Valley'

'Ultimate retreat'
a testament to
Laws' success

By PETER
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IT'S been billed by its selling agent "the ultimate rural retreat", and in the case of "Cloud Valley Farm", the agent isn't indulging in idle hyperbole.

"Cloud Valley Farm", as many readers will know from years of tuning in to morning radio, is the longtime Yarramalong Valley retreat of the former broadcasting tycoon, John Laws.

With his wife, Caroline, Mr Laws developed the secluded grazing and bushland property into a luxury getaway farm to which he would repair at weekends to entertain, reflect and unwind.

That was until three years ago, when he decided to close that chapter of his life. The property was then sold privately to present owner, Sydney-based hotelier, Danny Docker.

It is now being offered for sale again, not because Mr Docker has lost interest, but because a health condition has rendered him unable to spend the time there that he would like.

The property has therefore been listed for sale by David Nolan of Webster Nolan Real Estate in Sydney, and will go to auction on October 1, unless sold before.

It is expected to attract bids (or offers) in a range from \$6 million to \$8m, at which price it would come in on a par with some of the smarter homes being sold about Sydney.

At "Cloud Valley Farm", though, the buyer will have not just one exquisite residence, but four, plus 131 hectares (324 acres) of productive country, and all in a private bush-ringed valley.

The property is in the upper Yarramalong Valley, where the spring-fed Wyong River first enters cleared country from the densely forested slopes of its upper catchment.

"Cloud Valley Farm" follows the valley, with double frontage to the river, for about two kilometres.

In earlier times the valley was home to a thriving dairy industry, but now



The main homestead at "Cloud Valley Farm" in the Yarramalong Valley, is set on a rise amid extensive landscaped gardens overlooking the river.

it is largely given over to lifestyle properties, many owned by prominent Sydney-ites.

Its changed status reflects the progressive upgrades of the Pacific Highway, which have slashed travelling times to the point where "Cloud Valley Farm" is now barely 1.5 hours from the city.

Broadly rectangular in shape, the property is about 80 per cent cleared pasture country, but fringed on all sides by a margin of remnant natural forest (including rainforest) bordering the heavily forested slopes that run up to the surrounding ridges.

Pasture paddocks are well grassed, helped by a moist environment (average rainfall about 1200 millimetres), and dotted by tall gums and a few mature red cedar trees that were fortunate enough to escape the early timber-getters' axes.

The property is considered capable of carrying 100 cows and calves, and is fully equipped for cattle production, with subdivision into 11 paddocks, stock water troughs and steel cattleyards.

It is not, however, for its beef producing qualities that a buyer will be paying \$6m-plus for "Cloud Valley Farm", but for its multiple lifestyle features and aesthetics.

The previous owners spared no expense in developing "Cloud Valley Farm" from a modest house and land

package into a virtual private resort, but the end result is not – as one might have expected – glaringly "showy".

Rather, the extensive improvements are a model of classy refinement, from the overall design and layout to the creative landscaping and choice of materials and appliances.

Entering the property, the visitor first passes the manager's residence, an attractive four-bedroom bagged brick structure with large, open-plan kitchen/family room, ceiling fans and two-car garage.

Next, there's a four-bedroom guests' lodge built of sandstone blocks in two self-contained wings divided by a covered outdoor dining area, with sweeping views over the valley.

Further on, one notes a log-cabin-style cottage used variously by guests or family, comprising two bedrooms, wrap-around verandah, slow combustion fire, air conditioning and two-car garage.

Topping it all, of course, is the main homestead at journey's end, approached by an avenue of exotic trees and set on a rise amid extensive landscaped gardens overlooking the river.

Built of bagged brick with aluminium roof, copper downpiping and sandstone flagged veranda, the homestead is a statement of four-star

self-indulgence – a testament to one man's personal success.

A large master bedroom with separate "his" and "hers" ensuites is complemented by a guest bedroom and bathroom, extensive sandstone-floored living areas, gourmet kitchen, library and attic.

The house bristles with modern gadgetry, from its retractable ceiling television to its ducted sound system and climate control, while outside is a heated swimming pool and floodlit tennis court.

Adjacent to the house is a self-contained one-bedroom apartment with billiard room, ideal as a teenagers' retreat, and paths lead from the house to various themed gardens with secluded getaway areas.

Among the many outbuildings is the 10-car garage built to accommodate the former owner's prized car collection. There are also several sheds, a workshop and stables.

The property is being offered for sale in fully furnished condition with all working plant and equipment on hand, but not included.

A buyer will have the opportunity to negotiate purchases of either.

Buyers will also have the option of retaining the services of the present managers, Troy and Rachel Broomfield, subject to discussions.

■ **Contact Webster Nolan Real Estate, (02) 8394 8875.**

In Brief

'Branglebar' passed in:

"Branglebar", a 5058-hectare property on the Bogan River about 100 kilometres south of Brewarrina, was passed in at auction by Ray White Rural last Friday on the auctioneer's bid of \$5 million.

Negotiations will continue on a private treaty basis, with offers above that figure considered.

The property was offered with 6000 megalitres of general security water entitlements on the Bogan River, with crops independently estimated at more than \$1m to have been given in as well.

■ **Contact Bruce Gunning, (0428) 667 831, or Tim Lyne, (0428) 657 174.**

Gunnedah block sold: A

1154-hectare block 20 kilometres from Gunnedah was sold before auction last Wednesday to an anonymous buyer for an undisclosed amount.

The well-watered property contained 11 dams, one well and two bores, and all subdivision fences were sound.

About 480ha of the property were arable, including 121ha of lucerne, and 526ha of open grazing.

Stocking capacity was rated at about 250 to 280 cows and replacements with some cropping.

'Coolahville' passed in:

"Coolahville", an 809ha property adjacent to the Coolah township, was passed in at auction last Friday by agents Peter Milling and Company, Dubbo, and Lloyd Sheridan, Coolah, for \$2m.

However, as of early this week negotiations continued with the losing bidder, a district landowner.

'Killalee' passed in: "Killalee", a

526ha New England mixed farming property, was passed in at auction last Friday by joint agents, Elders and Landmark, on an audience bid of \$1.95m, and negotiations are proceeding with local competition.

The property is 15 minutes from Armidale and has been used as a commercial wool, grain and meat enterprise.

It is comprised of gently undulating country, with 80 per cent basalt soils and good shelter.

'Narrara' for private sale:

"Narrara", a 76.5ha property on the Mid Western Highway near Bathurst, did not sell at auction last Saturday and is now for private sale through Landmark Bathurst for \$895,000.

The property's main attraction is its homestead, which incorporates an original woolshed, four bedrooms, two bathrooms and two living rooms.

■ **Contact Allan Aylward, (0413) 622 557.**