The right for people to appeal against proposed developments throughout most of the Northern Territory was suddenly taken away by the Government last night.

Member for Nelson, Gerry Wood, said amendments to the Planning Act passed in Parliament could see open slather for developers with little avenues for people to object.

“The Government calls it limited third party appeals. In practice, there’ll be no right of appeal for non-residential areas. This means proposals in Darwin or Winnellie cannot be appealed unless you had put in a submission when the proposal was first announced”.

The restriction also extends to subdivisions and consolidations in rural areas. Gerry said “We could see the ludicrous situation that a local government authority, which has responsibility over roads, would not be able to appeal against government-proposed changes to roads”.

There will also be no appeals for decisions where the Minister is the Development Consent Authority. This would apply to most of the NT that is not under a Planning Scheme.

“This is not a ‘limited’ appeal”, said Gerry. “This right has been completely blocked”.

Gerry also raised the possibility of introducing a mobile Development Consent Authority to replace the current situation where the Minister acts as the DCA for many rural and remote areas. “This would open proposals to public meetings. That is true democracy at work. But the Government knocked this on the head”.

Some amendments to the Act were welcomed by Gerry. “I am pleased to see the Government has taken up my suggestion of introducing the concept of aesthetics of building design and amenity. Whilst this can be a subjective view, it will allow reviewers to consider the look and feel of a building alongside requisite codes and practices”.

Gerry said “The Planning Act certainly needed to be updated and there are some good points in the Government’s amendments. But these are far outweighed by stifling people’s right to raise their objections”