NT's planning laws spark anger

By JILL POUSLEN

RESIDENTS from all over the Greater Darwin region are angry that their “lives are being turned upside down” by Territory planning laws.

About 100 people came together at a public forum in Darwin yesterday to discuss the best way to “send a message to our governments”.

Head of the Planning Action network Margaret Clinch said there had been a lot of individual community meetings for residents in different places affected by spot rezoning.

“The problem is with spot rezoning there is a pink or yellow sign up and suddenly their whole world is turned upside down because there is something being built there that will change their neighbourhood,” she said.

“Their main investment for their lives are their homes; even if they are renting ... a sudden change in the neighbourhood is going to upset their plans for the future.”

Ms Clinch said that the proposed rezoning of Blake St and Gardens Hill CRES from community purpose to residential, because a developer wants to build two nine-storey apartment blocks is a good example of the negative impacts that spot rezoning can have.

The Gardens residents have bandied together to oppose the development which would include 143 apartments, offices, a convenience store, a coffee shop and 275 parking bays.

At a meeting in September, The Gardens resident Andrew Neville said the development would completely change the face of the suburb.

The main issues discussed at the meeting were the increased traffic on the narrow roads and the height of two nine-storey unit blocks compared to the present one and two-storey mix.

Ms Clinch said The Gardens was just one example of Territory governments not consulting with communities effectively.

“There are plots of community purpose land dotted around the suburbs that are ... being swallowed up by the government on the basis that we need more homes, we don’t deny that but it’s going to create a huge problem now but also in the future that land won’t be available for what it is meant for,” she said.

The Gardens apartments application has been heard at the Development Consent Authority but awaits the final say by Land, Planning and the Environment Minister, Peter Chandler – who makes the final decision alone.

Parents Matt and Nicoletta Allen will go into party mode on October 28 each year after little Miles came into the world on his sister Stella's birthday.