

Gidgegannup joins development outcry

By **ANDREA MAYES**

URBAN land developments for Gidgegannup that would boost its population tenfold have sparked outrage.

Developer Port Bouvard plans 2270 new lots in the rural hamlet, 2000 of them in the "town centre" that residents say doesn't yet exist.

The development is among several planned for the Perth Hills, from Midland to Toodyay, that would see the area's population increase by up to 100,000.

Angry residents who want to preserve their "Hills lifestyle" are opposed to the plans.

"We're a small community that doesn't even have a town centre,

just a few shops and a school along the main road," long-time Gidgegannup resident Helen Jackson said.

"What they want to do is transform Gidgegannup into suburbia."

Gidgegannup is 40km from historic Toodyay, where residents are fighting a similar battle with developers, as *The Sunday Times* revealed last week.

Gidgegannup Takeaway owner Chris Jackson said large-scale development was planned across the Perth Hills which would ruin residents' unique rural lifestyle.

"This is just the tip of the iceberg — it's happening right across the Hills," he said.

"Land prices have gone up so much the developers can't wait to

cash in, regardless of the impact on the local communities.

"They talk about people wanting a 'tree change' but how can you have a tree change when the blocks are too small to put trees on?"

The Port Bouvard plan would see 270 rural residential lots released in 2009 and a further 2000 townsite lots — with an expected maximum size of 500sq m — released from 2011.

The population of the townsite and surrounds is expected to balloon from about 700 to 7280.

Gidgegannup Primary School is already at capacity and is using transportable classrooms. The hamlet has no medical facilities, scheme water, public transport, council rubbish collection service or mobile-phone coverage.

Mr Jackson said Gidgegannup residents collected rainwater for their own use and were vehemently opposed to the developer's plans to connect the town to scheme water.

He said Gidgegannup saved Perth more than 300,000 kilolitres by being self-reliant on water, and switching to scheme water was environmentally irresponsible.

Locals were also concerned that some of the land earmarked for development was too steep to build on, ran adjacent to a wildlife sanctuary and that developing it would pollute nearby estuaries.

Meanwhile, Brigadoon locals are concerned that a 219-lot development in their area may threaten the survival of the already endangered Carnaby's black cockatoo.

Brigadoon Progress Association chairwoman Juliet Cusato-Nocker said no environmental impact assessments had been undertaken and residents were worried that waterways, flora and fauna would not be protected.

"There's also a fire risk because there are only three exits and one of them is a locked gate," she said.

"We are realists and we know we are unlikely to stop development — we just want to make sure it is done carefully."

Save Perth Hills spokesman Rusty Gellar said developments were planned across the Hills that would increase the area's population by 80,000 to 100,000.

"If this happens, say goodbye to the Hills," he said.