

# Tensions high at public meeting over mosque

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Tensions ran high as more than 200 residents met at Caversham Hall to debate the proposed Swan Valley mosque last night.

The meeting, called by the Swan Valley Progress Association, was addressed by vice-chairman Rod Henderson, Bosnian Islamic Society president Sajit Smajic and architect Gorki Bogdanich.

Mr Bogdanich said the Bosnian community had a cultural and recreational centre in Beechboro but Bosnian Muslims did not have a mosque.

He said a traffic impact report found there would be no negative effect on the surrounding area.

Mr Smajic said more than 50 per cent of the society's members lived near the proposed mosque site.

"I know there are bad stereotypes about Islam," he said. "I know many of you came here to oppose this project but we Bosnian people have been

living with you as neighbours for 15 years, sometimes 30 years and you have never had any problems with us."

Mr Henderson said the proposed mosque would violate the Swan Valley Planning Act created in 1995 to stop the encroachment of urban infrastructure in the valley.

A number of residents said they were concerned about parking and traffic problems.

One man in the crowd yelled out, asking if the society was sponsored by Saudi Arabians. Another shouted out "give them the Gibson Desert."

Ellenbrook resident Alyssa Hayden, recently elected as Liberal Member for East Metropolitan, said she opposed the mosque on planning grounds. She asked people in the crowd to "refrain from racism or religious comments".

Mr Henderson and Mr Smajic both said the meeting helped them understand people's concerns.



Vocal: Residents raise concerns about a planned mosque in the Swan Valley at a meeting last night. Picture: John Mokrzycki

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