

New council rules for bigger homes

By Sarah Allely

HOMES in the Rockdale local government area are about to get bigger with the passing of a raft of planning rules to take effect immediately.

Rockdale Council approved its Residential Amenity Improvement Strategy (RAIS) last week.

Bigger buildings with higher ceilings, larger rooms, increased storage space and compulsory balconies were some of the changes as well as sound-proofed walls and floors, extra bathrooms, bigger lifts, extra outdoor living space and the legal use of roof tops for barbecues.

Cr Liz Barlow argued that the policy was significant enough to warrant community consultation but, instead, the amendments would take practical effect from the date of the council's resolution. The policy would be publicly exhibited with feedback considered before the changes were made compulsory.

Developers would be strongly encouraged to follow the policy immediately.

Rockdale resident and former councillor Anne Edwards said the policy had not been thought through, was worded in a misleading way and required public input.

The council's director of planning and development, Karl Mezgailis, said that by passing a resolution that the policy would take effect immediately, the council was signalling to developers what was expected, so people were not caught out by an overnight policy change.

"We can't absolutely legally enforce it. It really becomes law after the exhibition period," Mr Mezgailis said.

Some developers had already been presented with the new requirements.

Mr Mezgailis said in some cases buildings would be higher as a concession to the increased minimum ceiling heights of three metres but

they would have to be balanced with existing over-shadowing rules.

"It may impose additional burdens on developers," he said.

Cr Gary Green moved an amendment to further increase single dwelling heights, from 7.4 to 7.8 metres, saying that as a tall person he was "sick of walking into houses and banging his head".

Cr Lesa de Leau said she supported much of the policy but had "serious concerns about increasing the footprint of buildings and the amount of extra bulk".

Covered balconies would not be included in floor space ratio calculations. Units with two or more bedrooms would require two toilets, double garages would be bigger and a single height control of 7.8m would replace those differentiating between one- and two-storey developments.

The council will advertise in the *Leader* when the policy is made available to the public.