

Heritage listing stance scorned as 'piecemeal'

Stories by **Slobhan Tanner**

A FURTHER eight period houses in Rockdale have been added to the state heritage list as a 10-year review of the area's listings draws to a close.

The recent listings bring to 260 the number of houses in the Rockdale area on the state heritage list, all of which were voluntarily listed by owners.

There were 492 natural and cultural heritage items identified in the 1991 Rockdale Heritage Study but only a small portion of those were listed.

Rockdale manager of urban planning Alex Sarno said: "It's not necessary to have them all on the register - we have representatives from all the various eras now."

Cr Liz Barlow, who has campaigned vigorously on heritage issues, said the council's review was a piecemeal approach to conservation.

"They think one of everything is enough. It isn't; we need to think of streetscape," she said.

"They couldn't care less about conservation. They ignored the advice of professional council staff in this review; there is nothing left to protect houses in Rockdale."

Rockdale Council scrapped its \$1000 heritage grant last year and abolished the post of heritage adviser on council staff.

Cr Gary Green defended the council's position.

"We don't hold a gun to property owners' heads and force their prop-

erty rights away from them," Cr Green said. "And, at the end of the day, nothing of any historical significance has been lost in Rockdale."

Cr Green launched a scathing attack on what he called "heritage extremists".

"They use the debate as a pretext to stop development. They usually have psychological issues with change that most likely require counselling, not counselling."

Historian Bernie Sarah said he was surprised at the new listings from a "pro-development" council.

Mr Sarah resigned from the inaugural Rockdale Council's heritage committee after seven years because of what he described as its ineffectiveness.