

City acts to protect heritage

Tom Rabe

THE City of Stirling will implement a planning amendment designed to prevent the demolition by neglect of some of Perth's oldest buildings.

The City last month made changes to the Local Planning scheme No 3, requiring the owners of heritage buildings to ensure the structural integrity of their property.

Demolition by neglect refers to the process of deliberately allowing heritage buildings to become so dilapidated they must be demolished.

Stirling's decision to prevent demolition by neglect was supported by Mt Lawley Society president Bruce Wooldridge, who encouraged more of Perth's councils to adopt the measures.

"This issue may only relate to a handful of properties, however it has a profound impact on particularly neighbours, with the deteriorating properties being a magnet for graffiti, vandalism and squatting," Mr Wooldridge said.

"Many councils talk about heritage protection, however this is usually not backed by regulations and importantly implementation. Stirling has without doubt the strongest heritage credentials of any council in WA."

City of Stirling Mayor Giovanni Italiano said the changes would help decrease instances of antisocial behaviour typically associated with derelict buildings.

"While instances of demolition by neglect are rare in the City of Stirling, we know that run-

down old buildings have the potential to attract squatters and can lead to anti-social behaviour, vandalism and environmental health issues," Cr Italiano said.

Mr Wooldridge said the society held concerns that recent local government amalgamations would see Mount Lawley, Menora and Inglewood moving to the City of Bayswater, which has no such heritage amendment.

"Unfortunately, the City of Bayswater is not one of the councils following Stirling's lead on demolition by neglect," he said.

The City of Stirling is also investigating the use of various heritage incentives (financial and non-financial) to encourage the conservation of places with high heritage value.