

Heritage listing bid for highrise block opposed

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THE first highrise unit complex ever built in Queensland is expected to receive a provisional Heritage listing on Friday.

But plans by the Queensland Heritage Council to extend protection to Torbreck, built in the Brisbane suburb of Highgate Hill in the late 1950s, have run into opposition from residents.

Fred Iezzi, chairman of the board of directors of the company-titled development, said unit owners voted to fight plans in 1995 for a such a listing and their position had not changed since.

"Members don't want it to happen," Mr Iezzi said.

"They have concerns about further levels of control being put in place over their residences. There is also the case of the unknown, as well.

"A number of residents have questioned the worth of the listing. There's an impression that it's got to be a 19th century building to be eligible for consideration by the council."

Mr Iezzi said a meeting last week with council chairman John Brannock was "extremely disappointing" because it lacked the "two-way dialogue we were promised four years ago". A request to further delay consideration of the listing was rejected, he said.

Torbreck board members met last night to review their options, which include an appeal, request for an independent assessor or legal action.

If no appeal is lodged after a provisional listing, the property will have Heritage status within 30 days. That would limit owners from undertaking any major redevelopment work without permission from the council.

But Professor Brannock said residents in the 150-unit development still had many misconceptions about the Heritage listing, which was first mooted in

1993. He said there were groundless fears the listing would interfere with a \$1.5 million external refurbishment effort under way.

"Hopefully those fears have been dispelled but they have to get their shareholders' approval," Professor Brannock said.

"I would undertake to talk to the shareholders if there is some difficulty."

According to the Heritage Register, the complex at 82 Dornoch Terrace is historically and architecturally significant because it "pioneered the market for home units in the state".

"The Torbreck complex is a good example of 1950s architectural and landscape design in its form, attention to climate control and use of materials," the register says.

"Torbreck has aesthetic and social significance as a prominent landmark of inner suburban Brisbane."

Constructed between 1958 and 1960 by the late builder Noel Kratzmann, the complex comprises a seven-storey "garden block" facing Chermiside Street and a 20-storey tower on Dornoch Terrace.

It was advertised at the time as "the greatest single contribution to home development in the state" and the premier at the time, Frank Nicklin, predicted it would help limit urban sprawl.

Earlier this year, the Queensland branch of the Royal Australian Institute of Architects included Torbreck in a list of modern buildings worthy of Heritage listing.

Professor Brannock hailed the development for its "importance to the social fabric of the area and its prominence on the highest hill for quite some distance close to the centre of Brisbane".

"It was an oddity in those times and modelled on the American experience of having people living on top of each other - and the experiment worked."