



Down it comes: Demolishers arrived at the historically significant house *Rothesay* to begin work recently, sparking concern among the community and development watchdog groups. The house's owners, Anglican Homes for the Elderly, would not be drawn on their plans for the site. Picture: Peter Weaving

Anger at hostel demolition

By AMANDA HURLEY

THE demolition of an historically significant local hostel for the elderly has again raised questions about the ability of private surveyors to issue demolition permits.

Although not a heritage protected house, *Rothesay*, in Bay Road, Sandringham, had local significance. It was thought to have been built in 1912 for use as both a private residence and a guest house.

Members of the local development watchdog group, the Save Sandringham Action Group, are angry at the lack of public consultation before the demolition. They have promised to keep an eye on any future development on the valuable foreshore site.

"I have to admit the first knowledge of what was happening there was this morning (Monday) when I drove past it," group president Kenneth Thompson said.

"I thought that (the demolition of the hostel) was a real shame, and one can only imagine with horror as to what will happen on the site."

Rothesay is owned by Anglican Homes for the Elderly, which announced the hostel's closure in May this year. Its more than 50



residents were moved to other local hostels. The owners have remained tight-lipped on what will happen to the hostel site, stating a number of options were being explored by the Anglican Homes for the Elderly board.

"My official comment is the board has not yet made a decision on what will happen to the land," executive director Inas Thompson said.

Bayside Council development manager Michael Topp said a private developer had approached the council last month to check if

the property was protected by a conservation order. Further planning applications have to be lodged, but Mr Topp said foreshore bylaws meant that any development on the site would be no higher than two storeys.

Brighton Residents for Urban Protection president Kristin Stegley said she was concerned about the house's demolition.

"This should not be happening," she said.

"The community should be very cross about what's happening there."

Local historian Hebe Boyd said the house first belonged to the Ross-McDonald family, and was used for private boarding.

"I think it may have been used as a guest home, where people came for their holidays," she said. "Sandringham was just developing at the turn of the century, and Bay Road would have been a very select spot."

Ms Boyd said the house's demolition had become a talking point among the community, with many people trying to guess what would be built there. *Rothesay* was bought in 1958 by the then Church of England Homes for the Elderly. At the time it was Sandringham's first hostel for the elderly.