

foke



FRIENDS OF
KU-RING-GAI
ENVIRONMENT INC.

PRESIDENT'S REPORT 2006

This year we have seen the destructive impact of the State Government's urban consolidation policies and practices on those things which all communities should respect and cherish - heritage, character and amenity of residential neighborhoods.

It is a tragic irony that this destruction has occurred in Ku-ring-gai during a significant celebratory year for Ku-ring-gai - its centenary. It is even more so given that one of the stated objectives of the State Government's urban consolidation policies, namely, housing choice, is not being fulfilled. In their promotional spin, developers are now marketing the giant, alien, monolithic buildings using the very qualities they are destroying – trees, soft foliage, green vistas, open space, uninterrupted views, serene garden outlooks. Anecdotal evidence describes sales of new unit developments are “sluggish”, suggesting that the unit developments are neither of the style nor the price required by existing and potential residents of Ku-ring-gai. The latter would suggest that another of the State government stated objectives, namely the provision of affordable housing, is also not being achieved for many. Prices of a new unit development in Ku-ring-gai would suggest that affordable housing is not being provided. It is appalling that successive State Planning Ministers have so misconstrued the facts and ignored the wishes of the Ku-ring-gai residents, who, mindful of the canopy in their thousands, by letter and attendance at public meetings, emphatically stated that they did not want 5-storey development and called for a real interface between any medium-density development and single houses.

I will now highlight some of the important areas in which FOKE has been involved in the past year. Our activities are *not* anti development, but *are* anti inappropriate development, which shows scant regard for the *common* good in the pursuit of personal, short-term gain. Our aims have been, and continue to be; promoting awareness and conservation of this very special place Ku-ring-gai that Council's planning consultant said in 2000 “Exhibits environmental splendour of such a scale it is of National Significance.” and to which Emeritus Prof. Gareth Roberts at the “Ku-ring-gai Heritage Awards 1998 referred “We in Ku-ring-gai enjoy an environment which, by virtue of its location, topography, landscape and buildings make it a place of heritage significance.”

■ SUPPORT FROM THE NATIONAL TRUST

As the State Department of Planning continues to deny Ku-ring-gai and other municipalities urban conservation area status for those areas worthy of the recognition, a motion was put to the November National Trust AGM by two FOKE members and was passed unanimously. The Motion read, in part, that The Trust write to the Premier Iemma and Minister Sartor requesting and recommending:

1. “an immediate moratorium on all Urban Consolidation Policies (SEPP 53) applications in Ku-ring-gai Council's proposed UCAs, until issues of Interface Bulk and Sympathetic Design are resolved; and
2. immediate Gazettal of Ku-ring-gai Council's proposed UCAs.”

■ PRODUCTIVITY COMMISSION - CONSERVATION OF AUSTRALIAN HISTORIC HERITAGE PLACES FOKE members who appeared before this Enquiry identified the main pressure on the conservation of historic heritage places as being the application of blanket State Government urban consolidation policies. Images from FOKE's December 2005 newsletter insert “The Perils of Urban Consolidation” were submitted.

■ RESIDENTS' KITS In response to requests, FOKE has made available copies of each of its three practical Kits, formulated to help residents deal positively with applications for (1) a single dwelling

development (2) a dual occupancy development proposal and (3) a multi unit development. Residents can make a difference and achieve a more appropriate and amenable development outcome for their neighbourhood.

■ TOWN CENTRE MEETINGS

FOKE members have attended consultation sessions but have expressed concern with the way the sessions have been conducted and with the proposals for additional shops and residences, which the community perceives as going beyond the demands of DPNR and the needs of the Municipality.

■ COUNCIL GRANT

FOKE has lodged an application for \$500 under Council's Grants program to assist financing production of a photographic record of the houses on Ku-ring-gai's rezoned sites (as per the State Government Gazette of LEP 194 /200 in May, 2004) and on the interface sites adjoining these rezoned sites, along with the contextual streetscapes. FOKE regards it as most important to compile and preserve a record of these areas, already changed/soon to be changes forever by medium density developments.

Examples are already shown on FOKE's display charts. "*Urban Consolidation: The Cost is Our Heritage*" shows the houses presently threatened with demolition to make way for multi-unit housing developments and the second, "*Living with Shadows*" shows those houses which will be effectively ruined by adjacent 5-storey apartment blocks. Both displays were the focus of much horrified comment when on display at Gordon Library during the year. Many thanks to Katrina Pickles and Kathy Cowley who are overseeing this important photographic record.

FOKE has also produced a PowerPoint presentation entitled "*Endangered Areas of Ku-ring-gai Threatened by State Government Medium Density Policies.*" An abbreviated version will be shown tonight. FOKE's intends to use the PowerPoint to further awareness of the destruction of Ku-ring-gai caused by the blunt one-size fits all application of the State Government's Urban Consolidation policies.

■ 2006 NATIONAL TRUST FESTIVAL

FOKE hosted two events.

HOUSE & GARDEN DISPLAY. FOKE was delighted that Maisy Stapleton CEO of Museums and Galleries of NSW, National Trust Board Director and co-author of "Australian House Styles" opened this display, which featured examples of the architectural wealth of Ku-ring-gai's houses. Also featured were examples of Ku-ring-gai's fine heritage of gardens. There was much positive feedback from the display with plans for future exhibition. Our thanks to Council and Gordon Library staff for their support in mounting this display.

PROMOTING ECO/HERITAGE TOURISM IN KU-RING-GAI

FOKE hosted a forum on this matter. It brought together like-minded people and groups whose combined wealth of knowledge, experience and passion can be used to promote Ku-ring-gai's tourism potential. The groups showcased their work with displays. We acknowledge Council's support of this evening.

We are indebted to Mr Phillip Jenkyn OAM and Mr Rymill Abell who shared their valuable experiences at Hunters Hill and Lord Howe Island respectively.

■ NATIONAL TRUST AWARDS

In a joint submission FOKE and other community groups submitted the 2005 Festival Program in The National Trust 2006 Awards Program. Whilst we did not win our section there were many positives from the exercise. The Trust's certificate of appreciation is shown here.

■ BLUE GUM HIGH FOREST

FOKE has continued to support the campaign to save the Blue Gum High Forest in St Ives. The current status is ?

■FOKE MEMBERSHIP

Four Newsletters were published during the year. These newsletters are intended to inform and encourage active participation in lobbying by letter writing and other means. Emails are providing a quicker way of communicating. If you are not currently receiving FOKE emails please advise the Committee of your email address.

Membership fees have not increased since our inception. We are most appreciative of, indeed dependent on, your donations accompanying your renewals. Thank you.

Publicity.

Two FOKE members, Dinah Warner and Jean Posen, appeared on Sixty Minutes’ program which explored the pretentious Mc Mansions in bare surroundings, the reason for FOKE’s formation in 1994.

Members of FOKE escorted columnist and broadcaster, Mr Michael Duffy on a tour of Ku-ring-gai. This resulted in the Sydney Morning Herald article "To save the city, first they destroy it." the title of tonight’s Public meeting.

FOKE members have attended Rallies and Forums convened in other suburbs and the CBD against over development

Congratulations to committee member, Jan Langley who received Council’s 2006 Outstanding Service to the Ku-ring-gai Community Award (shared) in the Citizen of the Year Awards, presented at Council’s Australia Day Celebrations.

■ OBJECTIVES FOR THE COMING YEAR.

You will recall The Hon Tom Uren AO told us in this hall in 2001. *“You have something special here in Ku-ring-gai. Fight for it.”* We will continue to do so, with your help, This year, as in previous years, we are mindful of the words of Ku-ring-gai Historian Margaret Wyatt. *“If one values one’s environment one needs to be aware, informed, vigilant and, if necessary, militant.”* Please assist the Committee with your ideas and with your practical help.

■ THE FOKE COMMITTEE

The 2005-6 Committee was a team of thoughtful, caring, creative people, generous with their time and talents. Kathy Cowley, Julienne Blunck, Malcolm Galloway, Jill Johnstone, Janine Kitson, Katrina Pickles, Jean Posen, Jeannette Tsoulos, Dinah Warner, During the year Jeannette retired from the Committee having been a founding member of FOKE. We wish to record in this Report, FOKE’s deep appreciation of Jeannette’s dedicated and most valuable and creative contribution to the FOKE cause. Thank you Jeannette.

In 1938 Annie Wyatt founder of The National Trust in Australia and Ku-ring-gai resident wrote of the qualities she admired, - *“The ability to dream and see visions and the steadfastness of purpose to carry them to fulfilment ”* Annie Wyatt was indeed describing the qualities of your committee members. Could you please join with me in expressing your appreciation.

Anne Carroll June 2006
