

foke



FRIENDS OF
KU-RING-GAI
ENVIRONMENT INC.

**PRESIDENT'S REPORT
22 MAY 2019**

‘Sydney is beautiful. There we agree. But this very loveliness has dulled its civic intelligence. This stupidity, lulling us into the nonsense that "market knows best" and fuelled by the biggest building boom in history, has begun to erode the very beauty on which it feeds.

The immensity of the boom, and the abject failure of successive governments, to sustain either built quality or essential services, could transform this glorious city into a sad hole where trains don't run, buildings collapse, cladding combusts without warning, homes are unsafe.

For this is unlikely to be an isolated case. The government may tub-thump about "cracking down on cowboy certifiers" but the Opal Tower fiasco did not result from a moment's inattention, a pocket of incompetence. More probably it's the product of a systemic, deliberate, ideological shift; of government's refusal to govern.’

SMH 5 January 2019: Elizabeth Farrelly

That quote taken from a recent *Sydney Morning Herald* article summarises and typifies the plight of planning across Sydney and the impact that rampant development is having on the life of Sydneysiders. There has been increasing public criticism that successive State Governments have failed to govern and plan effectively for its citizens.

During the past 20 years that FOKE has been active in Ku-ring-gai, we have witnessed a property-and developer-driven economy aided by the lowering of building and planning standards, increased non-compliance and overdevelopment, lack of accountability and due diligence in monitoring and managing development by those with the responsibility to do so. The downgrading and incremental changes to environmental and planning legislation has led to the transforming of suburban streetscapes, destroyed heritage, a degraded environment and citizens' diminished quality of life.

Unfortunately, this is likely to continue now that development approvals have been taken out of the control of local councils and communities. And, as a consequence of an expected significant population increase, the State Government-appointed Greater Sydney Commission, headed by Mrs Lucy Turnbull, which developed and is administering the Greater Sydney Region Plan for a Metropolis of Three Cities, continues to ramp up development across Greater Sydney and Ku-ring-gai. This will mean more people, more

development, more traffic, more congestion and even greater loss of the environment and heritage.

As a community group, FOKE will continue to work hard to convince Ku-ring-gai Council and the North District Commissioner Dr Deborah Dearing to reduce further heritage and environmental degradation within Ku-ring-gai from inappropriate zoning and development. The deep excavation or ‘mining’ of building sites to build new apartments and underground car parks already has particularly impacted Ku-ring-gai’s tall tree environment.

Tony Rescei, President of Save Our Suburbs, in a recent *FOKE Talk* newsletter stated: *‘New South Wales needs to adopt a more open minded and objective approach to planning and learn from others. And importantly, we need to use regulation sparingly and not to enforce the implementation of unproved ideology.’*

● GREATER SYDNEY COMMISSION – KU-RING-GAI PLANNING

In November 2018 I was invited by the Greater Sydney Commission (GSC) to be on the 100-member Citizens’ Panel and was required to attend two planning workshops at the Novotel Hotel in Parramatta.

The workshops were, primarily, to listen to citizens’ discussions and opinions on the directions for measuring the performance of the Greater Sydney Region Plan and the context for developing an indicators-based framework for Greater Sydney.

As the GSC’s Northern Districts Commissioner, Dr Dearing is being tasked with increasing the Ku-ring-gai population and providing scope for thousands of additional dwellings in Ku-ring-gai by working closely with staff and the Council to achieve that result. The GSC has proposed 4,000 new dwellings for Ku-ring-gai over the next five years.

We have been advised by Dr Dearing and MP Jonathan O’Dea that the 4,000 proposed new dwellings are already built into the current plans. However, council staff are advising councillors that more rezoning for dwellings will be expected. Councillors are being asked to decide whether to increase new dwelling numbers by planning for either taller buildings or by spreading the density into existing residential areas.

FOKE has been monitoring the data from the Department of Planning for the number of new dwellings approved since 2004. Ku-ring-gai’s data records approximately 12,000 dwellings approved and approximately 9,000 completed by 2018. The existing target set by the State Government in 2002 was to be 10,000 dwellings from 2004 to 2031. However, the goal posts have moved yet again and the new dwelling agenda is set for 2036.

Essentially, the community were misinformed by the Council in 2012 as to the actual dwelling yield contained within the combined Local Centres Local Environmental Plan (LEP) and Ku-ring-gai Principal LEP when staff advised a yield of 10,320 dwellings. It is now evident that, even with Ku-ring-gai’s dwelling data having well exceeded 10,000 new dwellings since 2004, there could potentially be upwards of a further 4,000 dwellings still built into the existing LEPs in the designated six local centres.

Subsequently, since the gazettal of the LEPs, several council-owned properties have been reclassified from ‘community’ to ‘operational’ land, thereby allowing them to be sold and/or redeveloped. Council has zoned some of these properties for high density residential unit development up to seven storeys in height and potentially more in the case of the Lindfield

Hub. The reclassified properties include council car parks and facilities such as libraries and halls. Council is now working on development proposals for the Lindfield Hub, the Turramurra Hub, which includes developing Turramurra's Little Village Park, the Lindfield Library site, the Gordon Council Chambers and the Gordon Golf Club. Council's calculations for the Local Centres LEP never included the new dwellings on council-owned land and properties.

We will continue to monitor and lobby Ku-ring-gai's State Government representatives and the Council as well as gather community support to prosecute the fact that our 2031 target already has been exceeded.

● GOVERNMENT PLANNING AND ENVIRONMENT POLICY CHANGES 2018

Following numerous calls by the construction industry for improved standards, Matt Kean, when Minister for Better Regulation, said the reforms passed in Parliament in 2018 would allow the NSW Government to come down hard on dodgy operators. Building and development certifiers are facing the toughest penalties to date, under laws that aim to clean up the industry and give confidence to the community and homebuyers.

On 31 October 2018 the NSW Government passed the *Building and Development Certifiers Act 2018* (the Act). The Act forms part of the Government's response to the *Independent Review of the Building Professionals Act 2005* (the BP Act), also known as the Lambert Review. The Act will replace the BP Act and aims to improve the administration of certifiers in NSW with a simplified, modern and updated structure.

This change was long overdue. However, time will tell how effective these changes will be and whether Private Certifiers will be made more accountable for monitoring and ensuring builders and developers adhere to approved plans and appropriate building standards.

● NATIONAL TRUST HERITAGE FESTIVAL – FOKE'S EVENTS

As she has in previous years, FOKE's Vice President Janine Kitson planned several events to celebrate our heritage and participate in the 2018 National Trust Heritage Festival.

Our first event in May 2018 highlighted Ku-ring-gai's wilderness champion **Alex Colley**, OAM (1909-2014), who worked tirelessly to ensure that NSW's forests were appreciated and protected into the future, with a walk in Turramurra's Sheldon Forest, one of Sydney's rarest urban forests.

The **Butterflies, Camellias and Blue Gums** walk conveyed the remarkable story of Dr Gustavus Athol Waterhouse (1877-1950) famed for his expertise in butterflies. Athol lived in close proximity to his famous brother Professor Eben Gowrie Waterhouse, whose garden surrounding his home called *Eryldene* is today one of the most significant heritage gardens in Sydney showcasing Professor Waterhouse's camellias.

The **Camellias and Tree Lovers** walk commenced at the State Heritage listed Gordon Railway Station, once renowned for its garden with Professor Waterhouse's 'camellia touch'. The walk also included a visit to the Annie Wyatt Garden that adjoins the station and celebrates her history of founding the National Trust in 1945.

Ku-ring-gai Matters: Time for World Heritage, held in the Pecorino Café in Gordon, was also FOKE's annual fund raiser for the Environmental Defenders Office NSW (The EDO). Participants listened to a range of speakers advocate that it is time to World Heritage list the Ku-ring-gai Chase National Park, the second-oldest National Park in Australia, and one of the first in the world. The lunch, donations and raffle raised \$1,675.00 for the EDO.

The 2018 FOKE National Trust Events have been entered into the National Trust Heritage Awards again this year.

● THE BETTER PLANNING NETWORK NSW

FOKE's membership of the Better Planning Network (BPN) of more than 430 community groups continues. We believe it is particularly important to maintain this connection, given that the State Government is increasingly legislating away planning standards and controls and stripping away local councils' powers. Moreover, it is even more important than ever for membership groups across NSW to remain committed and dedicated to the cause. FOKE is one of the founding member groups of BPN.

BPN submitted several written responses on State Government planning policies throughout the year on behalf of the members. They included papers on the *Draft Community Participation Plan*, the *Nick Kaldas Review of the NSW Planning System*, the *Draft Environment SEPP Explanation of Intended Effect* and the *Draft Voluntary Land Acquisition and Mitigation Policy for State Significant Mining, Petroleum and Extraction Industry Developments*.

In aiming to raise planning across NSW as a central issue in public debate leading up to the NSW State elections and building on widespread community concern about both the quantity and quality of development, the BPN committee re-released the *Planning for People: A Community Charter for Good Planning in NSW* that all member groups and their members, as well as the general public, were asked to support and sign. Every signed copy was automatically sent to key NSW election candidates. Closer to the elections in March, the committee published a *Candidates' Planning Questionnaire* for use by local groups in their state electorates.

● SAVE OUR COUNCILS UPDATE

Save Our Councils Coalition (SOCC), the organisation that FOKE publicly campaigned with to stop forced council amalgamations, has continued throughout 2018 to campaign with those councils forcibly merged by the Berejiklian Government for them to be demerged.

As we stated in earlier reports, Premier Gladys Berejiklian in 2017 reluctantly withdrew proposals to forcibly merge a number of councils that were fighting the matter in court. However, she failed to allow a referendum to demerge to those communities that had been forcibly merged, even though she admits the whole process was fatally flawed.

And, the Premier is still failing to listen to communities and councils right across NSW that are still determined to be demerged. **The Government's refusal to listen shows the serious and fundamental flaws that go to the heart of good governance—it is a total failure to understand and appreciate the values of local democracy.**

We have also learnt that the KPMG full ‘Cabinet in confidence’ business case papers, which the Government refused to release to councils, are still unable to be accessed despite Pittwater resident Phil Walker using GIPA (Freedom of Information) legislation to force disclosure of the underlying KPMG documents used to justify forced council amalgamations. The documents remain inaccessible despite a hearing at the NSW Civil & Administrative Tribunal (NCAT) held in March 2018.

SOCC has released a comprehensive analysis of the financial performance of councils forcibly amalgamated in 2016. The publication ‘*Council Amalgamations: A Sea of Red Ink*’ was released in Sydney outside Parliament House on Thursday 7 March 2019 and in Orange on Friday 8 March.

The SOCC analysis shows that the combined study of metro council operating results will deliver \$114 million less than the Government’s proposal target of \$103 million surplus. The regional and country study of 13 mega councils shows a combined deficit of \$48 million—expenditure exceeding income.

SOCC President, accountant and financial professional Brian Halstead, says that it is ‘*scandalous*’ that merged councils are not delivering ongoing financial reports to show how and if they are meeting proposed results. ‘*This is especially [so] given the claims made in the amalgamation process and the grants given to all the amalgamated councils*’, he says. ‘*Without any explanation of the failure to deliver the amalgamation financial results, the proposals appear misleading and deceptive.*’

SOCC's view is that the State Government completely misjudged the effects of the decision on local electorates. This view is reinforced by the post amalgamation by-election results in 2018, with large voting swings against the Government—as high as 22 percent in some country electorates and 25 percent in Sydney.

We in FOKE continue to believe it was right and justified for Ku-ring-gai Council and other councils to demand accountability and full and open transparency of the ‘Cabinet in confidence’ KPMG reports (which still remain confidential) and to fight off the State Government's flawed forced amalgamation processes in the Courts!

Premier Berejiklian says that council mergers have been shelved. But many unmerged communities, whose councils escaped through legal challenges, do not believe the State Government will stick to that promise.

● **KU-RING-GAI LOCAL PLANNING PANEL (KLPP)**

The introduction of the Ku-ring-gai Independent Hearing and Assessment Panel (IHAP) was made mandatory by the State Government in March 2018. These panels assigned to councils were justified by the then Minister for Planning, Anthony Roberts MP, to bring transparency and accountability to development assessments received by councils. The panel appointed to Ku-ring-gai was renamed the Ku-ring-gai Local Planning Panel (KLPP) by July 2018.

Councillors are no longer able to determine development applications. Instead, development applications are either determined by the KLPP, council staff, or the relevant regional planning panel, which for Ku-ring-gai is the Sydney North Planning Panel.

Taking away local control of development applications and giving authority to unelected representatives on panels appointed by the State Government is, FOKE believes, primarily to assist the Government in fast-tracking and rubber-stamping development across NSW. The KLPP has determined in 2018 approximately 80 percent of the development applications that have been approved.

The KLPP open session and audio-recorded meetings generally have been held in the Council Chamber every third Monday at 12.30pm, making it particularly difficult for working residents to attend. Following submissions by and questioning of contenders the panel's deliberations are made behind closed doors and the minutes posted on the Council's website after 48 hours, and rarely record which members voted for or against a proposal.

The KLPP maintains the standard model panel comprising a chairperson, two independent expert members—all approved by the Planning Minister—and one local community representative. The community member, selected by the Council, will represent the geographical area within the LGA of the proposed development so as to provide local perspective.

The members and alternate Chairs on the KLPP are a mix of experts in planning, architecture, heritage, the environment, urban design, economics, traffic and transport, law, engineering, tourism, or government and public administration. The Chair must have expertise in law or government and public administration.

● **HERITAGE CONSERVATION AREAS (HCAs) – Deferred HCAs**

Over the past 14 years we have watched the gradual degrading and diminution of the 28 Ku-ring-gai Inter-War Heritage Conservation Areas classified by the National Trust (NT) following a study in 1997.

In 2000, 2008 and 2010 Ku-ring-gai Council commissioned a series of heritage studies preparatory to having these HCAs gazetted. In 2011 the Council decided to 'update' its HCA studies and split the study into two areas across Ku-ring-gai—the north and south areas.

Nineteen years on since Ku-ring-gai Council first commissioned a series of heritage studies, the process of putting in place adequate HCAs remains, unfortunately, a slow one and an increasingly politically driven one—particularly in the decision making of the current Council.

The updated studies identified appropriate HCA outcomes in the north areas of the municipality and were placed on exhibition in 2015 and 2017. Notwithstanding this, the Council proceeded this year to adopt only some of the exhibited HCA areas.

HCAs protect the valued streetscapes and characteristics that attract residents to Ku-ring-gai. These are attributes and amenity which can easily disappear, as is so evident in the huge impact of high density development within the 28 HCAs proposed by the National Trust.

Council should continue examination of potential HCAs and actively promote a proper and informed community understanding of the benefits of HCAs to both the area and residents as well as to property values.

● **NEW BIODIVERSITY LAWS: STATE GOVERNMENT’S WAR ON THE ENVIRONMENT**

At our Public Forum in May, David Morris, CEO of the Environmental Defenders Office (EDO), spoke passionately about the problems biodiversity currently faces in NSW under the contentious Biodiversity Conservation Act 2016 introduced into law in 2018.

The EDO’s key concerns include the expanded use of biodiversity offsets, removal of a legal requirement to ‘maintain or improve’ native vegetation, and the use of self-assessable codes to ‘de-regulate’ clearing native vegetation.

Prior to giving its consent for development of an area with high native vegetation, the Council requires a Biodiversity Development Assessment Report. One of the tests in this report is that of Serious and Irreversible Impact (SII) on the ecological community. Fortunately, Ku-ring-gai’s Blue Gum High Forest and Sydney Turpentine Ironbark Forest are already listed on the SII table. However, this could still be overturned by State Significant Development or Infrastructure works.

Outside of a few listed items, consent for clearing or development can be given where offset credits are used. The flexibility in the scope of offsets available provides ample potential for species to decline to critically endangered levels.

These recent Biodiversity Conservation and Land Management Reforms repealed several existing Acts, in particular the Native Vegetation Act 2003, the Threatened Species Conservation Act 1995 and the Nature Conservation Trust Act 2001. Also repealed are the animal and plant provisions of the National Parks and Wildlife Act 1974.

We believe that the Government has a responsibility to protect, restore and ensure resilience for this State’s precious biodiversity and not jeopardise or risk its survival. The EDO stated in the March 2018: *‘Challenging the failures of the Government minister to adhere to laws made by Parliament is vital to defending democratic principles and the rule of law.’*

We urge members, as we did last year, to write to our State representatives, Alister Henskens SC MP and Jonathan O’Dea MP, and remind them that parliamentarians have a responsibility to ensure that the legislation has ecological rigour, transparency and clarity and is consistent with the principles of Ecologically Sustainable Development (ESD)—none of which is exhibited in the gazetted legislation.

The actions by the State Government were contrary to their pre-election promises of ‘enhancing the State’s biodiversity to benefit current and future generations’. So, another promise was broken to favour a pro-development agenda to weaken nature protection laws!

We need to remain consistent with our view that we require stronger biodiversity laws—not weaker ones. FOKE remains strongly opposed to these detrimental reforms and will continue to use every opportunity to lobby our representatives and the Minister to amend or repeal the legislation.

● RECLASSIFICATION: COMMUNITY LAND AND ASSETS

We have now recorded as many as 27 community assets that have been or are likely to be for sale and/or redevelopment. We believe this wave of reclassification by Ku-ring-gai Council was triggered after the Council made the unfortunate decision to purchase the *SUN* building (828 Pacific Highway, Gordon), which is still not fully leased after several years.

Work is progressing slowly on the proposed and increasingly controversial Lindfield Hub on the west side of Lindfield. FOKE remains concerned that plans for the Hub are more focussed on providing profits for the Council and the developer than adequate community facilities which Council has promised to replace in Lindfield. Lindfield currently has three supermarkets and certainly does not need a fourth, or fifth! There has been no consideration of the five primary schools situated within 800 metres of the station and the traffic in and around the Lindfield centre and Pacific Highway, particularly with regard to so much proposed additional high rise development and the associated traffic that will be generated with the Hub and the proposed seven storey Coles' development.

In February, the Council suddenly disbanded the Lindfield Village Hub Reference Committee, which included seven residents. Only 10 short months earlier it had been established as a platform for community, stakeholders and the Council to collaborate on aspects of the Lindfield Hub urban renewal project such as place-making, environmental sustainability, social procurement, service delivery, communication and design. This marks a new low for our Council, as it pushes forward with an agenda to increase heights to 10 and 14 storeys. **It will set a precedent for future developments across Ku-ring-gai and we must ensure our councillors do not let this occur.**

In contravention of assurances that the Lindfield Library site and its associated community rooms would continue to operate on its current site or an alternate site within Lindfield until the Lindfield Community Hub was completed, the Council submitted and advertised a development application (DA) for the site over the 2018-2019 December/January holiday period. Ku-ring-gai Council has again disregarded its residents' concerns about a pro-development ideology. FOKE has made a submission on the DA.

We remain disturbed that so many council owned properties and open space, such as libraries, community halls and car parks, are being proposed for commercial and high rise development.

We will continue to remind the Council that, with the significant population increase Ku-ring-gai has experienced over the past 16 years, it is short sighted to sell off open space and community facilities when we need additional public facilities, not less.

It came as a shock to many in Ku-ring-gai when the NSW Government of the day, appearing to ignore their Duty of Care to the residents of the 13 areas of combined Bushfire Hazard with Bushfire Evacuation Risk, went ahead with their apparent priority of increasing both density and population. Minister Anthony Roberts added these previously protected areas in Ku-ring-gai to the KLEP, rezoning them for the main part to Environmental Living 4. This new zoning, gazetted at the end of January 2018, permits the addition of secondary dwellings on existing developed blocks in areas of evacuation risk, thereby potentially increasing density across these areas. The 13 areas all have in common, mostly, a single road [viable in bushfire] servicing emergency vehicles into the area and at the same time

providing egress to evacuating residents. Add to this potentially disastrous mix of two opposing flows of traffic, the predictable compromised-to-nil visibility in bushfire combined with the expected speed of wildfire due to slope and close proximity of the hazard, and the prospect of fatalities becomes distinctly foreseeable.

All these facts make the Government's planning decision to allow for increased density—resulting in more people and increased vehicles to evacuate on roads—in areas of gazetted compromised evacuation risk even more surprising. It surely must raise the following simple questions in this electorate:

If the authorities cannot guarantee safe evacuation of the existing population in wildfire conditions, why would they potentially increase the density, population and number of vehicles to be evacuated? The second dwelling will not be unoccupied.

Why would the local Council and the Department of Planning ruthlessly disregard the lack of support for increased density conveyed in writing by the Police and Fire Authorities, including the Rural Fire Service?

● **FOKE WEBSITE AND FACEBOOK**

FOKE's webmaster Ursula Bonzol has substantially updated the FOKE website with the assistance of our web developer. The www.foke.org.au web address has been maintained. I would like to thank Ursula for her tireless work in designing the layout. The new format is compatible with all mobile devices and will enable us to manage and change information on the website more easily. Members will also be able to register and book FOKE events such as the National Trust Heritage Festival Events online.

FOKE's *FriendsofKuringgai* Facebook page is a daily recording of views and issues that FOKE is following and records people's views on these matters. The FOKE Facebook page is now linked to our website.

As ever, we encourage members to log on, contribute to the discussions, 'like' our Facebook page and post comments to the articles and news, such as is in the electronic newsletters we send to members and friends.

● **GOVERNMENT POLICIES AND PLANS**

FOKE continues to make submissions to State Government planning policies, Ku-ring-gai Council and the Greater Sydney Commission on issues affecting local planning decisions.

Medium Density Housing

With the recent re-election of the Liberal State Government we remain concerned about the pressure being placed on Ku-ring-gai to rezone more land for high rise and medium density development. Whilst the Government's medium density housing policy was largely shelved leading up to the elections, we understand the medium density policy is now expected to be rolled out across Greater Sydney and possibly Ku-ring-gai.

Ku-ring-gai's LEP currently does not permit medium density in single residential or R2 areas. However, I understand that Councillors are being pressured to consider options of zoning increased density in single residential areas for such purposes.

Newly appointed Planning Minister Rob Stokes said he was ‘*not wedded*’ to any particular law or policy. But Sydney's local councils had to plan for medium density or the State Government would intervene, he said.

Ku-ring-gai Council already has provision for medium density in the form of R3 townhouses in the current LEP, so we believe that Ku-ring-gai should continue to be exempt from the medium density policy.

Waterhouse Camellia Sasanqua Hedge – Gordon Railway Station

FOKE leaped into action when it became apparent that upgrade works at the Gordon Railway Station would threaten the station gardens, particularly the rare heritage hedge of camellia sasanqua. The station also has a strong connection to Annie Wyatt, who in 1935 organised the Tree Lovers’ Civic League, the forerunner to the National Trust, to plant memorial trees overlooking the station.

Thanks to MP Jonathon O’Dea, a site meeting about the upgrade works to the Gordon Railway Station was organised. Representatives attending the site meeting included FOKE, the Ku-ring-gai Historical Society, Ku-ring-gai Council, Sydney Trains, NSW Heritage Office, and the NSW Minister for Transport. At this site meeting on 28 February 2018, Sydney Trains gave a strong commitment to protect the State Heritage Register values of the Gordon Railway Station and its heritage gardens, once one of the most celebrated railway gardens in Sydney. Assurances were given regarding repairs and minimal changes to the platforms and their canopy, replacing a hedge with mature and saved replanted sasanqua camellias plants and protecting a row of significant trees. This has been successfully completed and the camellias are blooming as this report is being written.

FOKE’s involvement in the Community

FOKE committee members attended the workshop and presentation on the Ku-ring-gai Council Community Strategic Plan and the Recreation in Natural Reserves Strategy Workshop and encouraged our members to make submissions. FOKE representatives also attended some of the topical annual Sydney University Henry Halloran Forums.

FOKE has contributed regular monthly articles for publication in the local independent newspaper *Monthly Chronicle* and the online *Village Voice* which are distributed throughout the northern suburbs of Sydney.

● FOKE’S STUDENT PRIZES

FOKE Macquarie University Prize

FOKE is pleased to announce that it will be funding an academic prize to be awarded to a final year Macquarie University student in recognition of academic excellence in Environmental Studies. The Category 2 academic prize of \$300 will be awarded for two years, firstly in 2020 to a final year student completing their undergraduate program in 2019 in the course of Bachelor of Environment or Bachelor Environment with Bachelor of Laws.

FOKE aims to promote the importance and value of conservation of the environment and nature, and would like to encourage students to become involved in their local area with environmental issues. It is hoped that the award will raise awareness of FOKE and the environmental issues facing urban communities and society generally. We are very grateful 10

to committee member Katrina Pickles for drafting and submitting the application forms, and for liaising with Macquarie University for its introduction.

Jan Langley Sustainability Award – East Lindfield Public School

The award was presented by Philip Langley and Janine Kitson to sixth grade student Fiona Davey. Fiona was considered by the school to be a driver for sustainability in her school environment.

Jean Posen Environment Award – Lindfield Public School

I attended the prize giving to present the book voucher prize to sixth grade student Laura Loel who exhibited a real passion for improving the environment.

●WORLD HERITAGE LISTING OF KU-RING-GAI CHASE NATIONAL PARK

In October 2018 FOKE resolved to commence a campaign to call for the World Heritage listing of Ku-ring-gai Chase National Park (KCNP). A committee, headed by Ursula Bonzol and Janine Kitson, has begun to investigate the UNESCO listing process, research and prepare the necessary documentation to meet the selection criteria. This committee aims to encourage participation from all relevant community and environmental groups.

To be included on the World Heritage List, sites must be of outstanding universal value and meet at least one out of 10 selection criteria. FOKE believes KCNP can meet a number of the key UNESCO selection criteria for listing.

●ENVIRONMENTAL SUB-COMMITTEE:

This FOKE sub-committee, established four years ago, continues to highlight the plight of Ku-ring-gai's Blue Gum High Forest, the Sydney Turpentine Ironbark Forest and the cumulative impacts of zoning areas for high density development in environmentally sensitive areas. As we have reported above, FOKE highlights this with several walks that are conducted during the National Trust Heritage Festivals.

We remain concerned for Turramurra's *Hillview* within the surrounding proposed heritage conservation area. We question why significant parts of the *Hillview* precinct have been allowed to be zoned R4 for high density unit development. As we reported last year, *Hillview's* iconic historic buildings are being allowed to become run-down and neglected, with decorative elements being removed. FOKE's letter to Alister Henskens SC MP enquiring as to *Hillview's* future plans, care and deteriorating state has not had a reply.

FOKE has been lobbying the Council and MPs to retain *Hillview* as an important heritage community space in the Turramurra's centre that could to be restored and revitalised, as have other Sydney heritage landmarks, and used for community events such as markets, fairs, and other outdoor events etc.

●FOKE COMMITTEE

My appreciation and thanks go to FOKE's volunteer team of enthusiastic and dedicated committee members. My heartfelt thanks go to Ursula Bonzol, Carolyn Darby, Janet Harwood, Denise Hendy, Janine Kitson, Katrina Pickles, Kerrie Piper, Dinah Warner and

Tanya Wood for the important contribution they made to the organisation of FOKE this year. My thanks also go to Jill Johnstone who has been so helpful for a number of years in maintaining FOKE's membership, address and email lists and organising labels for mailings.

We are sorry to be losing committee member Kerrie Piper, who has done a wonderful job as Treasurer, and wish her all the best for her move to the South Coast. We thank Tanya Wood for stepping into her place as our new Treasurer. We are happy to welcome Cheryl Sutherland as a new committee member.

Special thanks must go to Ursula Bonzol and Janine Kitson who organise and edit the articles for the newsletter, *FOKE Talk*. We hope members are enjoying the newsletters and finding them newsworthy and of interest. We are always happy for feedback from our members about our publications.

I also thank Carolyn Darby who attends the fortnightly Ku-ring-gai Council meetings and reports key aspects from those meetings to our FOKE committee meetings. Carolyn also attends and reports on the KLPP meetings.

●FOKE MEMBERSHIP

To our loyal members, we thank you for your continued support and encouragement. Your membership is greatly appreciated and valued. FOKE simply could not function or survive without you.

In our 25th year of operation we are just as dependent on your support and generosity as we have always been and will be into the future.

Given the need for community organisations such as FOKE, which has actively campaigned during the past 24 years in caring for Ku-ring-gai, we ask your help in encouraging your children and their children, friends and neighbours to become members so that FOKE remains a relevant and active group for a further 25 years.

●DONATION

FOKE is most grateful for the generous donation of \$1667.96 given by The Archbold Estate Roseville Inc., which disbanded in 2018.

●FINALLY

In celebrating the 25th anniversary in 2019 since the founding of FOKE in 1994, we are ever mindful of our constitution and our stated aims and objectives to continue to work towards protecting and enhancing the environment and heritage of Ku-ring-gai. I believe we have upheld those aims for the past 24 years to the best of our ability.

We wish all our members a healthy and satisfying year ahead and look forward to welcoming you to our 25th AGM and Public Meeting in 2020.

Kathy Cowley
PRESIDENT