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FRIENDS OF
KU-RING-GAI
ENVIRONMENT INC.

PRESIDENT'S REPORT

24 MAY 2023

'Get out of the way': Rose Jackson's social housing warning for 'anti-development' Sydney suburbs'
(Tamsin Rose, *The Guardian*, Thursday 13 April 2023)

Ku-ring-gai has been warned.

With the election of the Labor Government in March this year, it has taken no time for the newly sworn Minister for Housing, Rose Jackson MP, to speak out, firing a warning to the North Shore and Eastern Suburbs that medium and high-density social housing developments should be built in Sydney's north shore and eastern suburbs. Jackson did go on to say *that she hopes to bring the communities, described by some as anti-development, with her.*

The Guardian article continued: *And if the residents there don't embrace them? Too bad...If they can't get behind it, well, get out of the way because we desperately need it,* the minister said as she packed up her opposition office and prepared to move into her new ministerial digs.

This is reminiscent of the attitude of an earlier elected Labor Government starting with Planning Minister Dr Andrew Refshauge, who in January 2002 demanded Ku-ring-gai set a target of 10,000 to 12,000 new dwellings to be built between 2004 -2031. Ku-ring-gai Council had already approved 974 units, with a further 484 being assessed under the SEPP 5 policy since 1998 which were not taken into consideration.

Dr Refshauge, in setting a precedent for the type of development he intended, targeted six sites in Lindfield, Gordon, Pymble, and Warrawee for high rise development up to nine storeys, overriding Ku-ring-gai Council's Residential Development Strategy that planned for a maximum of four-storey development.

Notwithstanding the dwelling target set in 2002 of 10,000 to 12,000, developments have progressively increased to reach approximately 16,000 new dwellings to 2021, with the Liberal State Government adding the requirement of a further 5,000 new dwellings to the Ku-ring-gai Housing Strategy in 2021. The additional 5,000 dwellings are to be achieved over the next five years to 2026. However, the increases are not likely to stop there!

It seems apparent that within Labor ranks the attitude prevails that the North Shore is ‘anti-development’!

Ku-ring-gai resident community surveys reveal that residents are generally not opposed to development if new development is respectful of Ku-ring-gai’s heritage, protects the nationally significant critically endangered tree canopy and prevents the potential loss of the last garden municipality in Sydney.

We believe Minister Rose Jackson has spoken prematurely without the knowledge of Ku-ring-gai’s considerable 16,000-17,000 contribution of new dwellings since 1998 in the form of high-density apartments, medium density units, SEPP 5 units, SEPP 55 Seniors Living units, boarding houses, and dual occupancies.

As Anne Carroll, FOKe’s founding and past President, stated in 2006: *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.’*

FOKE will continue to uphold those values and position with the newly elected State Government in the hope that those in government will understand and appreciate what Ku-ring-gai has to offer Sydney and Australia in terms of its environmental splendour and heritage significance.

● FOKe’S SUBMISSIONS - GOVERNMENT POLICIES AND PLANS

2022 was again a busy year for FOKe in researching, writing, and forwarding submissions in response to State Government proposals and Ku-ring-gai Council policies and plans. FOKe’s submissions are recorded on the FOKe website for members and the public to read.

Listed below are the local and State Government submissions FOKe has made in 2022.

- Planning Proposal Headfort House, 95 Stanhope Road Killara
- Headfort House Heritage Listing
- FOKe response to the Ku-ring-gai Chase National Park and Island Nature Reserves Draft Plan of Management
- Addendum Review of Environmental Factors, Killara Station Upgrade
- Planning Proposal PP 2022 658 Lourdes Retirement Village, 97 Stanhope Road Killara
- Gardens of Stone
- Development Application 55 Trafalgar Avenue Lindfield within an Urban Conservation Area
- Urban Forest Strategy letter to Ku-ring-gai Council
- Development Application 35 Water Street Wahroonga
- S13316 Heritage Listing and Rezoning for Killara Bowling Club and Killara Lawn Tennis Club
- Design and Place SEPP
- NSW NPWS Draft Cycling Strategy and Draft Cycling Policy
- Design and Place Exhibition Period

- Warragamba Dam Raising Project
- Planning Proposal 4 Pennant Avenue Gordon (Gordon Bowling Club)
- Ku-ring-gai Council Urban Forest Strategy
- Ku-ring-gai Council Draft Biodiversity Policy
- Norman Griffith Oval proposal to cover with synthetic grass

Along with the written submissions FOKE sent several emails directly to the Mayor and councillors on matters being debated at Council meetings in support of FOKE's earlier submissions. We continued to copy FOKE's submissions to Members of Parliament—the Hon. Jonathan O'Dea MP, the Hon. Alister Henskens SC MP and the Hon. Paul Fletcher MP—to keep them updated as to FOKE's views.

With Jonathan O'Dea MP not contesting the election in March, FOKE wrote and thanked him for his assistance to FOKE, his 16 years of service to the Davidson electorate and wished him well for the future and new career opportunities.

With the election of Matt Cross, FOKE will be writing to congratulate the newly elected Member for Davidson and ask for an introductory meeting and to seek his support for FOKE's undertaking, the Ku-ring-gai GeoRegion project.

We anticipate that 2023 will be another busy year of commenting on Council's planning policies and plans. Our particular interest will be in what the new government and Planning Minister do by way of making any potential changes to the NSW Planning System, in how changes may impact Ku-ring-gai and for any increases made to Ku-ring-gai's Housing Strategy targets.

Some of Ku-ring-gai's more controversial planning matters considered by FOKE in 2022 are outlined below.

Ku-ring-gai Urban Forest Strategy

FOKE is concerned that the current Ku-ring-gai Draft Urban Forest Strategy (KDUFS) lacks support for improving biodiversity. There was no discussion in the strategy on how forests will be protected from dieback, tree death and cumulative impacts, nothing about fines for destruction of rare forest trees, their hollows and food for bees, possums, or the threatened powerful owl. These are all an essential and urgent part of a strategy for urban forest, especially in an environmentally sensitive area like Ku-ring-gai.

There is inadequate recognition in the strategy for the protection and replenishing of the threatened endangered ecological communities, namely Blue Gum High Forest (BGHF), Sydney Turpentine Ironbark Forest (STIF) and Duffy's Forest that are all under Ku-ring-gai Council's care.

There is also inadequate recognition in the strategy of the main policies that are driving the considerable loss of trees within Ku-ring-gai, specifically, State Government urban consolidation policies driving new housing development in Ku-ring-gai. The lack of adequate protection and preservation of Ku-ring-gai's environment and Council's own policies within Local Environmental Plans (LEPs) allow unsustainable development along the ridgelines of

Ku-ring-gai within areas containing remnant threatened ecological communities.

Nothing is being done to address the main driver of loss of trees on private land, which remains overdevelopment and lack of deep soil for planting trees. Gardens and trees are being replaced with hard surfaces and concrete and this will continue unless the Council challenges State Government dwelling targets and mitigates the actions of the 10/50 Code in Ku-ring-gai.

A stricter requirement for applicants' landscape plans to make provision for locally endemic species within new developments and to monitor whether they are planted is needed. The proposed overall canopy target of 49% (an increase of 4% on the current 45%) that is recommended must be a minimum target in our view.

There need to be larger fines imposed for the illegal removal of trees. There is nothing in the recommendation to support increased penalties for illegal tree removals.

Importantly, delays in forest management have critical consequences. FOKE has been calling for a recovery plan for the BGHF as an urgent issue for many years.

Crucially, there is no recommendation to support increased protection for environmentally sensitive areas and improving biodiversity as part of the Draft Urban Forest Strategy. There is nothing in the recommendation for detailed steps to conserve biodiversity, such as implementing fauna management plans, state tree removal deterrents, crucial wildlife rehabilitation, hollow replenishment, and a rewilding programme. Unfortunately, the draft strategy will be the green flag for further biodiversity loss and bushland alteration.

In the last few months, a volunteer Tree Protection Group has been established in Ku-ring-gai by two councillors and several committed residents, including members of FOKE's committee who are passionate about Ku-ring-gai's environment and concerned by the ongoing increase in loss of urban tree canopy. This external community group will be focussing on the preservation and enhancement of tree cover and the natural environment throughout Ku-ring-gai.

Lourdes Retirement Village Planning Proposal

The Lourdes Planning Proposal (PP) represents what is so detrimental and concerning about the current NSW Planning System which is allowing developers and landowners to exploit Local Environmental Plans and local zonings over local community interests.

Planning Proposals (PP) are determined and approved by State Government appointed planning panels, whose members consist of retired representatives of government, the law and/or current professionals within the planning and property development industry. Unfortunately, approximately 90% of the PPs determined by NSW Planning Panels are approved.

The Lourdes Retirement Village in Killara has recently been purchased from Stockland by a Swedish private equity company, EQT Infrastructure, otherwise known as Levande. The sale was announced in February 2022 with a media release stating "Under the terms of agreement, EQT will acquire Stockland's portfolio of 58 established Retirement Living Villages..."

We are concerned that the Lourdes Retirement Village Planning Proposal is contrary to appropriate planning within a high bushfire area and is not in the public interest in that:

1. The plans are inconsistent with state strategic plans and with local strategic planning strategy and present an unacceptable risk to life and property by increasing dwelling numbers and a vulnerable population of residents.
2. The proposal seeks to retain the use as a retirement village and intensify the number of dwellings and occupants and is inappropriate on land with the highest risk to life and property, i.e., seniors' living. The proposal supports a doubling of the number of residents on the site, though the increase is not for the elderly but for "non-senior" housing.
3. The proposal contradicts Section 4 of Planning for Bushfire 2019 that establishes *strategic principles for the exclusion of inappropriate development*.
4. The plans are highly flawed due to inaccuracies, omissions and misleading assumptions, e.g., the PP does not adequately consider and respond to fire hazard and risk, and impact on the biodiversity of the locality.
5. The plans do not compliment but detract from the adjoining conservation area and the heritage items in the area, particularly on views from the adjoining bushland and adjoining residential lands.
6. The proposal includes the construction of 31 new independent townhouse buildings (to incorporate a total of 63 medium density residential townhouses) for 'non seniors' on the bushland interface.
7. The proposal to use R3 'non-senior' townhouses in the Bushfire Flame Zone at the interface with bushland to the south is unacceptable.
8. The Blackash Bushfire Assessment submitted by the applicant with the PP is flawed and under-estimates the likelihood of a bush fire, its potential severity and intensity and the potential impact on life and property.

Member for Davidson, Jonathan O'Dea's Parliamentary speech against this proposal stated: *"FOKE believes the planning proposal aims to maximise development and financial gain for the owners of the site rather than fulfil strategic planning goals or care for elderly and vulnerable people, and that it certainly does not prioritise the potential risk to lives or homes in the event of a major bushfire in the adjoining bushland. Essentially, I agree."*

An inappropriate rezoning and development proposal can set bad legal precedents and should be avoided at all costs. The EQT proposal is not in the public interest and hopefully will be refused. The Planning Proposal is currently being assessed by the Department of Planning and should be finally determined by the Sydney North Planning Panel this year.

Norman Griffiths Oval - Synthetic Turf Proposal

The Norman Griffiths Oval proposal has turned out to be one of the most controversial Ku-ring-gai public issues and continues to be following the REF (Review of Environmental Factors) released by Ku-ring-gai Council in April.

FOKE has joined with other concerned Ku-ring-gai community groups and individuals to form the Friends of Norman Griffiths Oval and are liaising with the Sydney-wide Natural Turf Alliance, which consists of groups and individuals fighting inappropriate synthetic turf proposals.

FOKE's submission on the Norman Griffiths Oval raised these concerns:

- The proposal is not ecologically sustainable or environmentally sound and is inconsistent with the management objectives of the area and, therefore, not in the public interest.
- Synthetic turf is made of plastic and is an artificial surface which over time has been known to break down into smaller particles allowing run-off and plastic pollution to be emitted into the surrounding rare and protected critically endangered ecological community (Sydney Turpentine Ironbark Forest-STIF), which the Council has a responsibility to protect and preserve. It is irresponsible for the Council to add more plastic and the waste it generates into the environment.
- There are concerns that over time micro plastics eroded from the turf will leach into the environmentally sensitive bushland environment which borders the oval.
- Synthetic turf, being a plastic, is a fire risk which should not be permitted in a fire buffer zone.
- Concern that the Council would plan and permit a synthetic artificial surface to be laid knowing that the surrounding critically endangered classified bushland (Sydney Turpentine Ironbark Forest), which directly borders the oval, will be potentially impacted by pollution and toxic run-off and that will sully the water quality flowing to Lane Cove National Park downstream.
- Synthetic surfaces are impacted by heat in the hot months of the year whereas natural grass surfaces absorb the heat and do not need regular replacement as do synthetic surfaces.
- The proposal will limit the variety of sports and activities that are currently played and enjoyed on the natural grass surface. The oval green space should remain available to all in the community not a single user group.
- The proposal will also have a negative impact on the natural waterflow and on the microclimate of the adjacent Bicentennial Park.

The Natural Turf Alliance in conjunction with the Friends of Norman Griffiths Oval has announced a public forum will be held on Friday 23 June, 2023 at the Ku-ring-gai Town Hall, Pymble from 7.15 pm – 9.00 pm. Leading scientists and experts will discuss the health, safety and environmental risks of synthetic turf and will present compelling evidence for the use of natural turf as the best choice for players, the environment, and the community.

North Turrumurra Recreation Area – Stadium Proposal by the NFSA.

When the Ku-ring-gai Council, in 2010, proposed redesigning the North Turrumurra Golf Course to include soccer fields and changeroom facilities, it promised to incorporate a park with children's playground and BBQ facilities in addition to walking tracks to adjacent bushland for the enjoyment of the wider community. The North Turrumurra Recreation Area (NTRA) project was partly funded with a 3.15% surcharge on ratepayers for six years to deliver a multi-use facility. Although the site is the only open green space (other than a designated dog park) for the northern extremity of the peninsular, the non-sporting recreational uses have never been delivered.

In 2021, the Northern Suburbs Football Association (NSFA) lodged a Development Application (DA) to build themselves a Home of Football based at NTRA on Bobbin

Head Road. The proposal consists of a 300-seat covered grandstand, and includes an exclusive gym, physio room, player and referee change rooms, meeting room, corporate box, closed media box, café, office space and boardroom.

North Turramurra residents overwhelmingly objected to the proposal by presenting written objections and petitions with over one thousand signatures. The main objections relate to the scale of the facility, intensification of use in numbers and time, its impacts on evacuation in an area designated High Bushfire Prone and the long-term occupation of a large part of the NTRA site by a single user. Residents also raised existing issues with parking across driveways, noise, and lights.

The NSFA acoustic, parking and traffic studies that concluded the new grandstand development would have no impact locally, were all based on the assumption of no change to existing player and spectator numbers. The NSFA denied intensification of use despite residents pointing out the inconsistency with an NSFA 2021-2022 application for a NSW Greater Cities & Regional Sport Facility Grant in which the NSFA stated, “*proposed total visits with a grandstand and facilities would increase by 36,489 individuals to the site annually*”.

Residents were ignored and the DA was approved by the Ku-ring-gai Local Planning Panel on the recommendation of the Council staff. The NSFA propose to fund the construction of the building, but it is unclear as to who will be responsible for its maintenance. The approval of the DA means the NSFA can now apply for a Sports Grant. Any Memorandum of Understanding between the Council and NSFA will be critical to financial implications on rate payers and use of the facility.

This process has broken the trust of North Turramurra residents with the Council. The peninsula remains without a passive recreation area despite the constituents having contributed to its funding for years.

Council embeds sale of more community assets

One must delve into the detailed attachments of Ku-ring-gai Council’s Community Strategic Plan to unearth its basis.

Unfortunately, the Draft Long Term Financial Plan (DLTFP) accompanying the Strategic Plan highlights the Council’s objective to sell \$110 million worth of community assets over the next 10 years.

FOKE continues to stress that the sale of community assets remains detrimental to the long-term amenity, health, and character of Ku-ring-gai. With the impost from NSW Planning to demand further population increases in Ku-ring-gai, the loss of the community assets that could be utilised as playgrounds, ovals, open space, and community services buildings is negative to the vision espoused for Ku-ring-gai in the Strategic Plan of an interconnected community appreciating our natural and heritage character.

The DLTFP is heavily supported by the sale of supposedly “underutilised” assets, without any mention of the largest asset, being 828 Pacific Highway Gordon, which FOKE believes to be underutilised to meet the needs of the Council or the community.

Going back to the early 2000's it was understood by the community that the Council Chambers and the Council's car park would be proposed for a "Gordon Hub" but not 828 Pacific Highway Gordon, which we understand is the current plan. We believe the house blocks adjoining the car park, which were bought by the Council for a park on the west side of Gordon adjacent to the shopping precinct, are now a potential additional Council asset being considered for sale and redevelopment.

Community assets are not a never-ending source of funds for the Council. Continuing in this manner to maintain a sustainable budget will eventually spell financial disaster, while undermining the key elements that make Ku-ring-gai such a wonderful area to live. Though the early years of this financial plan highlight spending on park development, this quickly dissipates. Very few new parks are planned while community assets such as bowling and recreation clubs, two libraries and public halls—the Town Hall on the hill in Pymble, its car park plus the former church's presbytery and Lindfield Senior Citizens hall, 14 former KOPWA affordable housing units and two tennis courts (on the Lindfield Library site) are planned to be sold and redeveloped. Those are just some of the assets to be disposed of by the Council.

Outlined in the DLTFP is an alternative financial scenario without asset sales, which is described as similarly "financially sustainable in terms of maintaining a balanced budget, sufficient unrestricted cash and available working capital, sufficient cash reserves and a permissible debt service ratio over the medium term".

The intergenerational equity of retaining existing assets close to residential areas for use by residents into the future should be the Council's primary purpose. The office block at 828 Pacific Highway should be the first asset to be sold as it does not add to the amenity of residents in terms of community services, recreation, or engagement.

Council's own Open Space Program highlights numerous areas where parks and playgrounds need to be built or expanded, such as in West Roseville and Lindfield west of the Highway. The Lindfield Hub will allow for approximately a thousand new residents with no significant open space for play and recreation within close proximity. And this overdevelopment planning scenario is also set for the "Hubs" the Council is proposing for Turramurra and Gordon.

The determination of "underutilised assets" (assets which have for years been deliberately allowed to run down by the Council) for sale will continue to be an area of concern for residents both for the short and long term as these sites, once sold, are assets that will be lost forever for the amenity of our ever-growing population.

NSW Planning Strengthens Power for Developers

Along with significant changes to planning in NSW, the Department of Planning and Environment is implementing measures to ensure that State significant projects in NSW are supported by what the Department describes as measures for "*better assessment, better coordination and better engagement*" for planning in NSW.

The Rapid Assessment Framework is a suite of reforms that are designed to make major

project assessments quicker and more efficient. However, FOKE questions whether this new system will improve assessment quality, engagement standards and customer service, as claimed.

The Better Planning Network (BPN) has summarised some of the adverse impacts of the new rapid assessment framework.

BPN believes that standardising application procedures to improve process efficiency should not come at the expense of statutory requirements. Importantly, the current plan that the proponent would decide the level of assessment required for the project will encourage the same problems that have occurred in residential developments in NSW.

A key objective of the reforms is that of Community Engagement. However, that is immediately undermined as there exists no requirement for applicants/proponents to seek the community's views by way of public exhibition of their draft Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) or any other means, such as public hearings. The reforms only stipulate an “expectation” that this will occur.

The level of community engagement must be determined and defined in the State Significant Development Guide and the Engagement Guide, and not by the proponent. The Department must provide the parameters for community engagement, not allow the proponent to “innovate”.

The Environmental Assessment certification process is a fundamental problem. To avoid the problems experienced in high rise development, it is essential that the Registered Environmental Assessment Practitioner (REAP) be on a rotational basis, rather than selected by the proponent. Similarly, the REAP that has prepared the Environmental Impact Assessment (EIS) must not be the same person to certify it.

Assessing cumulative impacts in these reforms in separate streams undermines the concept of “cumulative” itself. Any assessment of whether a cumulative impact assessment is required must consider impacts from projects undertaken in the past as well as future plans for an area. Clear guidance is required in this critical area.

FOKE remains concerned that these reforms will allow “interpretation” by the proponent in the areas of community engagement, environmental assessments, and certification. There is a reduction in the rights of third-party objectors that will combine to reduce community input and influence to the detriment of the public interest, leading to poorer planning outcomes.

Gordon Bowling Club Reclassification

A reclassification public hearing was held for the Council-owned Gordon Bowling Club. The Gordon community and FOKE lobbied the Council to retain the land for public recreation. However, the Council made the decision to rezone the bowling club to R2 for single residential development.

The Public Hearing was held on 24 February 2022 at the Ku-ring-gai Council’s Chambers in respect of a Gateway Determination under the Environmental Planning and Assessment Act 1979 (EP&A Act). Sixty-three public submissions were received by the Chair and 10 people

addressed the public hearing.

A report was submitted to the Council in April 2022 with the recommendation below:

1. That Council re-evaluate whether to proceed with the reclassification of the site from “Community” to “Operational” land as part of the Planning Proposal or, otherwise retain the site as RE1 zoned land and “Community” land to be developed as a public open space area suitable for multifunctional recreational and community facilities.
2. That the report on the Public Hearing for the reclassification of the site be made available for public viewing.

Council now needs to formally adopt the recommendation to retain the site as RE1 land suitable for recreation, which is clearly what the local community wants.

To prevent any further local recreational use by residents as took place during COVID, the site has now been completely fenced off by the Council, the reason given being that part of the site contains asbestos.

● **KU-RING-GAI GEOREGION, POTENTIAL UNESCO GEOPARK LISTING**

In 2018 FOKE initiated a project to add extra protections to, and increase awareness of, Ku-ring-gai’s natural heritage focusing originally on Ku-ring-gai Chase National Park.

This has since developed into a much broader area as FOKE has advanced the proposal of the Ku-ring-gai GeoRegion (KGR), with Ku-ring-gai Chase National Park as its centre, by extending along Berowra Valley, from the Hawkesbury River to northern Lane Cove National Park and east to the coast from Barrenjoey to Dee Why.

This large area, of approximately 44,000 ha, across northern Sydney showcases exceptional characteristics, with over 50 nationally and internationally significant geological environments of the Triassic sandstone landscapes of the Sydney Basin, volcanic diatremes, and unique and rare flora and fauna, as well as a density of Aboriginal sites that reflects the length of habitation in this area, with 1,424 sites currently recorded.

The special geosites chosen to profile exist in a broad area forming part of the Hornsby Plateau Landscape which includes:

- Cliffs, beaches and lagoons from Long Reef to Barrenjoey.
- Ku-ring-gai Chase National Park.
- Muogamarra Nature Reserve.
- Northern Garigal National Park.
- Eastern Berowra Valley National Park.

The proposal has been endorsed in principle by the Geological Survey of NSW and is supported by three local Councils (Hornsby, Ku-ring-gai and Northern Beaches) and the National Parks and Wildlife Service (NPWS), and local MPs.

Over the past year, work has focused on establishing six geotrails/geosites which currently include the following:

- Thornleigh/Hornsby diatreme geotrails and geosites (Hornsby)

- Browns Field geotrail (Ku-ring-gai)
- Sheldon Forest geotrail (Ku-ring-gai)
- West Head geotrail (NPWS)
- Long Reef geotrail (Northern Beaches)
- Bicentennial Park Geosite (Ku-ring-gai)

These geotrails/geosites will ideally allow for unobstructed and informative observation of the surrounding landscape and provide a superlative reference point for better understanding of Earth's evolution and our occupation of it as recorded in the rocks, geological structures, and landforms.

They will also serve to improve our understanding of our local scenery, provide a value-added incentive for local tour operations (particularly for Aboriginal cultural tourism), attract more visitors to our area and contribute as a valued education resources for local communities and school groups alike.

This geotrail/geosite establishment work has been directed by the KGR Geotrail Development Group comprising representatives of the NPWS, the three Councils, and the project Steering Committee, the latter comprising Ursula Bonzol, as Chair (FOKE), Angus M Robinson (also a FOKE member and National Geotourism Strategy Coordinator for the Australian Geoscience Council), Bob Conroy (former Executive Director, NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service), Dr John Martyn (Geologist and author), Dr Peter Mitchell OAM (Environmental scientist, former academic), Jayden Walsh (Ecologist), and David Robson (Retired Chief Geophysicist from the Geological Survey of NSW). The support of Dr Larry Barron and the Geological Survey of NSW for the preparation and examination of geological thin sections is also acknowledged with much appreciation.

Sponsorship and grant funding from various sources will continue to be sought to help protect and present an agreed assortment of geosites and the agreed geotrails which will serve to guide domestic and international visitors, students and research workers through a collection of safe and easily accessible viewpoints. During the past year, briefings by Ursula Bonzol and Angus M Robinson to local politicians at all three levels of government and community groups including FOKE members (Kathy Cowley, Ursula Bonzol, John Martyn and Angus M Robinson), STEP (Bob Conroy), and the Narrabeen Lagoon Group (Ursula Bonzol, Peter Mitchell, and Angus M Robinson), Destination NSW and representatives of the Greater Cities Commission, and an address to the Sydney Mineral Exploration Discussion Group (Angus M Robinson) have all been undertaken. With the election of a new State Government, this briefing work will need to continue well into 2023.

The Australian Geoscience Council (AGC) is currently implementing a National Geotourism Strategy (launched on 7th April 2021) designed to support the orderly development of major geotourism projects and activities in line with overseas trends and domestic regional development imperatives. The AGC has determined that the KGR project is one of three significant pilots for geotourism development in Australia.

The KGR is also referenced and recognised in the Australian Government's THRIVE 2030 Visitor Economy Strategy, which was launched last year, as having the potential to be considered at some future time for nomination as an Aspiring UNESCO Global Geopark for Australia.

In November last year, members of the KGR Steering Committee presented at the Linnean Society of NSW Sydney Symposium, highlighting the outstanding Natural and Cultural History of the KGR. A major co-authored technical review paper (with Bob Conroy as the lead author) that underpinned the presentations has been published in the Linnean Society of NSW Proceedings journal and is available for purchase at:

<https://step.org.au/index.php/books/krgeoregion>

During April/May this year, as part of the National Trust's Australian Heritage Festival, Janine Kitson organised GeoRegion walks at three geotrail/geosite sites (Bicentennial Park, Browns Field, and Sheldon Forest) with Dr John Martyn and Angus M Robinson as leaders with a keynote luncheon talk addressed by Dr Peter Mitchell OAM. In May, Angus M Robinson presented an overview of the project at the NSW LGA Annual Conference hosted by Northern Beaches Council. Dr John Martyn will also be presenting the geology of the KGR at the Australian Earth Sciences Convention to be held in Perth at the end of June.

The outstanding efforts of Ursula Bonzol as Chair and Secretary is acknowledged with much appreciation. From February, Ursula has taken extended leave overseas with Acting Chair responsibilities now assigned to Angus M Robinson, to be ably aided by Janine Kitson as Steering Committee Secretary.

We thank Acting Chair Angus M Robinson for the above report. We also wish to express our thanks to the members of the Steering Committee for their extraordinary work and achievements to date.

● **BETTER PLANNING NETWORK NEWS**

We are pleased to report that Christiane Berlioz (a member of the FOKe Committee) was voted onto the Better Planning Network (BPN) Leadership Group in March this year. Christiane will bring a depth, perspectives, and knowledge to the BPN due to her previous experience as a ward councillor for St Ives and a former President of the St Ives Progress Association.

The stated aim of BPN is to actively promote the planning principles outlined in the BPN *Planning for People Charter* and to represent the interests of members and communities to the Government. BPN continues to inform members such as FOKe (a foundation group member) of Government policies and processes in the context of the many new planning developments across NSW.

Like all community groups across NSW, BPN was hit hard by limited face to face meetings and with some group members having to step down during COVID.

During-the year the Department of Planning and Industry changed its name back to the Department of Planning and Environment (DPE), to reflect the change of ministers from Rob Stokes back to Anthony Roberts, who did not keep the Industry portfolio.

Minister Roberts, as reported in the 2022 FOKe President's Report, quickly revoked former Minister Rob Stokes' Planning Principles "*to ensure focus remained on the government's priority of delivering a pipeline of housing supply*". Minister Roberts also stopped the Draft Design and Place SEPP (State Environmental Planning Policy) from being implemented.

Whilst BPN and FOKE believed that the Draft SEPP did not go far enough in providing a robust and visionary planning system for NSW, and we said as much in our submission on the Draft SEPP, the SEPP was at least a step forward. Instead, the Minister has taken what BPN, FOKE and other community groups believe is a step backwards in not introducing the whole Design and Place SEPP, but just one part of this, as a Sustainable Buildings SEPP, incorporating BASIX type provisions.

BPN's Leadership Group attended several stakeholder online meetings with a group of various heads of departments within the DPE and has received expressions of appreciation for its input from the Department.

Some of the recent topics discussed at monthly stakeholder meetings were:

- Quarterly Housing Insights Monitor
- Expression of Intended Effects (EIE) for changes to Housing SEPP
- Varying Development Standards – Clause 4.6 of the Standard Instrument LEP
- Housing 2041 Strategy
- Regional Plans
- Unlocking Homes Package

The BPN Leadership Group made several submissions on a range of proposed legislative and regulatory changes, including:

- Sustainable Building SEPP
- Public Spaces Charter
- Flexible zoning; any mix of residential, business, industrial on a site
- Affordable, public, and social housing in new developments and on public land
- Draft Coastal Design Guidelines

• **NATURE CONSERVATION COUNCIL MEMBERSHIP NEWS**

FOKE has been a member of the NCC for several years. We believe it is important for FOKE, along with other member community groups, to act with one voice over NSW and Federal Government environmental and other policy issues which the NCC is professionally equipped and experienced to carry out.

NCC environmental policies outline a positive vision for a sustainable future for New South Wales. NCC members have formulated, through the annual conference, policy positions on a diverse range of environmental issues including:

- Climate Change Policy
- Urban Density Policy
- Biosecurity Policy
- Bushfire Policy
- Flying Fox Policy
- Forest Policy
- Intrinsic Value of Nature Policy
- Planning Policy
- Water Policy
- Steady state economy policy
- NCC Policy Book

● NATIONAL TRUST - AUSTRALIAN HERITAGE FESTIVAL

With the 2022 National Trust Festival occurring within the Federal election period FOKE did not participate in the festival. This year FOKE planned four events for the Australian Heritage Festival conducted through the National Trust.

We thank Janine Kitson who in this and in past years has taken on the organisation of the FOKE National Trust Heritage Festival events. However, understandably, in 2022 she stood down from the Committee due to standing as an Independent in the Federal Election on 21 May 2022. Despite also standing in the recent State Elections as an Independent, Janine had already committed to organise FOKE's heritage events for 2023, which were held on four Sundays commencing 16 April and concluding on 7 May.

Unfortunately, the walk in the Sheldon Forest, had to be postponed due to a bad weather forecast and rescheduled for Sunday 11 June. The four events planned for the National Trust Heritage Festival 2023 included:

- West Pymble Bicentennial Park Walk, Sunday 16 April 2023 led by Geologist Dr John Martyn
- Browns Field Walk, Sunday 23 April 2023 led by Dr John Martyn
- Sheldon Forest Walk, Sunday 30 April 2023 (rescheduled to Sunday 11 June) led by Australia's leading geotourism proponents Angus M Robinson and geologist Dr John Martyn
- Biodiversity, Geodiversity and Cultural Heritage – Ku-ring-gai GeoRegion Talk and Luncheon, Sunday 7 May 2023. Dr Peter Mitchell OAM to outline the natural and cultural history of Ku-ring-gai and why a GeoRegion is a “no threat” good idea.

● FOKE WEBSITE AND FACEBOOK

We are very appreciative of the wonderful assistance of our web developer Leo Martyn. Ursula Bonzol continues to be our webmaster although she will be taking some leave from the Committee to travel. Janine Kitson will be taking on the webmaster role in her place.

We have been so fortunate to have Ursula's expertise over the past few years in ensuring the smooth operation of the website including documenting newsletters and articles and in addressing any technical problems with Leo on the website. Ursula has kindly agreed to monitor the website from time to time while travelling, for which we are most appreciative.

● FOKE'S STUDENT PRIZES

Jan Langley Sustainability Award –Lindfield East Public School

For the first time in three years since the outbreak of COVID, FOKE was invited to attend the Lindfield East school's annual prize-giving. The Year 6 prize-giving was held in the Killara High School Hall.

The prize is given annually in honour of Jan Langley, who as a parent of children at Lindfield East Public School made a significant contribution to the school and was a member of the FOKE Committee for many years.

The 2022 Jan Langley Sustainability Award was presented to Kiane Wu. We sincerely congratulate Kiane in recognition of her hard work and contribution to the school over the year.

Jean Posen Environment Award – Lindfield Public School

Congratulations to Freya Bartlett who was Lindfield Public School's student recipient of the Jean Posen Environment Award 2022. Freya was a particularly active member of the school's "Clean Earth Committee" that monitored energy usage and encouraged the responsible use of power in classrooms by turning off lights and devices when not in use. She was part of a team that was awarded the Clean Earth Trophy for sustainable practices in the school.

The Award remembers Jean Posen, a long-standing member of the FOKE Committee who was passionate about protecting Ku-ring-gai's environment.

We are grateful to Jean's daughter Jennifer Brereton (Posen) for presenting the Award at the Year 6 prize-giving at the school in December.

•FOKE COMMITTEE

FOKE is so fortunate to have the wonderful committee composition made up of Ursula Bonzol, Christiane Berlioz, Carolyn Darby, Janet Harwood, Denise Hendy, Janine Kitson, Katrina Pickles, Dinah Warner, and Tanya Wood. I would like to thank them all sincerely for their valuable contribution and helpful assistance throughout the year.

Since the outbreak of COVID, the Committee has continued to hold ZOOM committee meetings. We have recently upgraded our subscription to ZOOM to enable the meetings to be longer than the normal 40 minute time limit.

I would like to thank Tanya Wood who has carried out her treasurer's role so cheerfully in keeping essential financial records for FOKE. Tanya has kindly agreed to remain as treasurer for 2023. FOKE will be opening a new bank account this year to receive grant money for the Ku-ring-gai GeoRegion project.

Our long-standing membership manager Jill Johnstone has been managing and updating FOKE's membership lists for many years since her retirement from the Committee. Jill's accurate membership record keeping and the printing of envelope labels for postage is really valued and appreciated. Thank you, Jill.

Ursula Bonzol and Janine Kitson continued in their role over the past year to collect, organise, write, and edit the newsletter *FOKE Talk*. I am most grateful to both for their wonderful teamwork in putting together the articles we have prepared for publication. We will miss Ursula's ongoing contribution over the coming months and wish her all the best whilst she takes time out for her travels.

My thanks must go to Katrina Pickles and her wonderful care in recording the Committee meeting minutes and to Carolyn Darby for her regular reports to the Committee on the decisions made by the Sydney North Planning Panel, the Ku-ring-gai Local Planning Panel

(KLPP) and Ku-ring-gai Council. With Carolyn's help we are kept right up to date with Ku-ring-gai's planning and policy decision making.

With the easing of health restrictions, Council meetings are again being held in the Council Chambers as well as being livestreamed, which records are saved and available on the Council's website. The Ku-ring-gai Local Planning Panel (KLPP) meetings are still being conducted monthly by video conferencing technology only and the viewing availability is not consistent as it is governed by the agendas.

Special thanks must also go to our long-standing member and auditor Bruno Codemo who has overseen our accounts and provided FOKE's AGM Statement of Accounts since 1995. We really appreciate his expert help and assistance to FOKE each year.

●FOKE MEMBERSHIP

We thank our FOKE members for their ongoing support of FOKE each year. We hope you are happy with the job we are doing.

Next year we will be celebrating FOKE's 30th anniversary, having commenced in 1994. We hope you are happy and proud of the work FOKE has been undertaking on behalf of our members in line with our commitment to protect and conserve the environment and heritage of Ku-ring-gai. I believe FOKE's contribution has made a difference in the way Ku-ring-gai is governed and managed. However, it has been a case of one step forward and two steps back at times. Our work is becoming increasingly frustrating and difficult as the State Government has stripped away the community's ability to be actively involved in local decision making. So much of the local government agenda is now directed and determined by State Government, State-appointed Planning Panels and the Land and Environment Court.

FOKE remains committed to ensuring that politicians and Ku-ring-gai councillors are aware of resident's views and interests in Ku-ring-gai's policy outcomes and future. Never has there been a more pressing time for community activism in positively contributing to the protection and care of Ku-ring-gai given the huge environmental issues such as climate change and the great threat of ecological degradation.

●IN CLOSING

We would greatly appreciate any assistance members can give to FOKE. We are a group of deeply committed residents who wish to pass on to future generations a Ku-ring-gai ~~which~~ that has a sustainable future.

We hope our members will experience good health and enjoy a peaceful and fulfilling 2023. I look forward to welcoming members to the 29th AGM next year.

Kathy Cowley

PRESIDENT
May 2023