

The General Manger  
Ku-ring-gai Council  
818 Pacific Highway  
GORDON NSW 2072

Attention: Ms Fleur Rees,  
Senior Landscape Architect,  
[frees@kmc.nsw.gov.au](mailto:frees@kmc.nsw.gov.au)

3 November 2021

Dear Ms Rees,

**RE: KU-RING-GAI URBAN FOREST STRATEGY**

In response your request for community views for the development of a detailed Urban Forest Strategy, please find our recommendations as follows:

- The strategy has to take long term impacts into consideration. An Urban Forest strategy needs to extend over decades with commitment to strengthening the number and extent of trees, their understory and ecological communities over time.
- We support the maximisation of the existing native tree canopy and would recommend strengthening the recognition of Ku-ring-gai as an essential part of the world renown Sydney Bioregion.
- Our urban parks need to have an increased native vegetation such as local grasses and ground covers that support local wildlife, particularly native birds. To date, parks are more focused on easy care lawn areas rather than a healthy environment for soils, vegetation and local fauna. An understory is essential for a healthy ecosystem.
- Our concern remains that we need stronger protection mechanisms, including fines for removal and/or damage to existing trees. Across Ku-ring-gai, we have seen numerous trees, including protected turpentines and blue gums damaged, or poisoned, in order for developments to proceed unfettered.
- A record of mature and significant trees should be made so that changes can be monitored and trees replaced. If there is no record, then the gradual decline of the urban forest and tree canopy will continue. If trees that are removed are then replaced and their health monitored, it serves to stop wilful destruction as a strategy to destroy our urban forest, a core ingredient of Ku-ring-gai's character.
- The 2020 Urban Forest Policy states the 'Council is committed to protecting and enhancing the character and identity through sustainable management of our its Urban Forest.' This

commitment cannot be met if there is no record to show the specifics of what needs to be protected.

- The following statement of the 2020 Urban Forest Policy should be reworded as it contradicts the overall commitments of this policy. ‘Balancing benefits from the protection, health and growth of the urban forest against associated risks’. The essential element is NOT of balancing the benefits, and thus alluding to a reduction in the potential of our urban forest, ‘but ensuring the benefits from the protection, health and growth of the urban forest are planned to mitigate any associated risks.’
- The current strategy does not mention the 10/50 Clearing Code that permits landowners in the specified 10/50 clearing entitlement areas to remove specified trees within 10 metres, or underlying vegetation within 50 metres, from their buildings without seeking approval. As parts of Ku-ring-gai are designated bushfire prone areas that would be affected by this code, and the overall misuse of this code to remove trees and vegetation in areas that are not in ‘clearing entitlement areas’ this needs to be specifically addressed and clarified within the Urban Forest strategy to ensure the protection of our urban forest from destructive and illegal removals.

Education and communication of the importance of a strong urban forest to residents and school groups:

- The short video of the importance of trees to a healthy environment accompanying this survey is excellent and should be widely distributed.
- We need to celebrate our existing tree canopy so that it is valued and protected by residents. This would also aid in educating residents on the value of maintaining native trees as habitat on private land.
- The rarity of our critically endangered ecological communities in our care needs to be better communicated and their value strengthened as part of improved protection mechanisms.

We look forward to the Draft Urban Forest Policy being circulated for consultation in 2022.

Yours sincerely,

Kathy Cowley  
PRESIDENT  
cc Mayor and Councillors