

12th July 2023

Mr Will Adames
Community Engagement Coordinator
Ku-ring-gai Council
818 Pacific Highway
GORDON NSW 2072

E: wadames@krg.nsw.gov.au

Dear Mr Adames

Re: Masterplan for St Ives Showground and Precinct

On behalf of the Friends of Ku-ring-gai Environment Inc (FOKE), and as a follow-up to the online submission lodged yesterday by the Acting Chair of the Project Steering Committee, Mr Angus M Robinson, I am writing to make a submission which outlines two proposals that FOKE believes will add considerable value to the St Ives Showground and Precinct as part of its further development under the proposed Masterplan.

FOKE is a long-established community group dedicated to the conservation and protection of Ku-ring-gai's built and natural environment. In 2018 FOKE initiated a project to add extra protections to and to increase awareness of Ku-ring-gai's natural and cultural heritage focusing originally on the Ku-ring-gai Chase National Park. This has since developed into a much broader area which includes other protected areas and most of the suburban areas within the municipalities of Ku-ring-gai, Hornsby, and the Northern Beaches as illustrated in the attached map. You will note that the St Ives Showground and Precinct is located in the centre of the proposed southern boundary of the GeoRegion, and just to the west of the Ku-ring-gai/Northern Beaches boundary.

A peer-reviewed journal paper, *The Natural and Cultural History of the Ku-ring-gai GeoRegion*, has recently been published by the Linnean Society of NSW <https://bit.ly/449lZcN>. The Ku-ring-gai GeoRegion, as it has now been designated, is now one of three approved GeoRegion projects within Australia being supported by the National Geotourism Strategy being implemented by the Australian Geoscience Council Inc. FOKE is now working alongside the National Parks and Wildlife Service (NPWS) and the three Councils including Ku-ring-gai Council) to develop this GeoRegion as a potential nomination as an Aspiring UNESCO Global Geopark. Community (including Aboriginal) engagement is regarded as a key ingredient in the furtherment of this process. Geoparks serve to develop a focus on environmental education, protection, and geotourism sustainable development. In this regard, FOKE notes the substantial number of schools particularly located in the Upper North Shore that would benefit enormously from gaining access to field located, environmental resources.

FOKE is aware that the UNESCO Global Geopark program encourages the establishment of environmental information centres promoting the objectives of a geopark which are readily accessible to communities. Whilst we envisage that these centres could be developed both within the Ku-ring-gai Chase National Park at Bobbin Head and within yet to be identified locations with the Hornsby and Northern Beaches Council areas, FOKE suggests that the St Ives Showground and Precinct, with its central location on a major road, would be ideally located for this purpose to support in the first instance the existing GeoRegion, and as appropriate, an approved UNESCO Global Geopark should this eventuality be realised.

It is worth noting that apart from FOKE, community support for this project has been indicated by the South Turrumurra Environmental Protection (STEP), the Australian Association of Bush Regenerators, the National Trust of Australia, the National Trust of Australia (NSW), and the National Parks Association of NSW, many members of which are residents of the Ku-ring-gai Council area.

I understand that Mr Robinson has already submitted a present status report which describes the scope and rationale for the development of this project, as well as the substantive level of technical assessment studies that have been undertaken to date. You will note that in association with the NPWS and your Council, we are focusing on developing a number of initial geotrails (i.e., existing walking tracks which include information about the landscape, geology, plants and animals and aboriginal culture) and geosites in Turrumurra, Wahroonga, and West Pymble. With the passage of time, FOKE suggests that consideration also be given by Council to the establishment of a new geotrail which links the St Ives Showground with the Ku-ring-gai Wildflower Garden.

It is proposed that all these geotrails and key geosites will be recorded into a national digital platform currently under construction by the Australian Geoscience Council Inc (AGC) as a pilot project of the National Geotourism Strategy. <https://bit.ly/3IoqPtS>

I note that the Masterplan aims to:

1. Integrate sustainable principles into future improvements.
2. Incorporate elements important to the community and users.
3. Consider natural biodiversity and cultural heritage values.
4. Provide a holistic vision for the future of the precinct.

FOKE is proud to have initiated this totally unique, community-supported project for Australia, which so visibly promotes the wonderful natural and cultural heritage of the Ku-ring-gai area. FOKE submits that our suggested enhancements substantially address the first three aims of the Masterplan and add as well an extra dimension to the vision of the Masterplan, should the NSW Government decide at some future point to progress the Ku-ring-gai GeoRegion to be put forward as a nomination for an Aspiring UNESCO Global Geopark.

Your sincerely

Kathy Cowley

Kathy Cowley
PRESIDENT

Map of the Ku-ring-gai GeoRegion showing the Location of the St Ives Showground

