

FOKE Talk

ELECTION 2015: MAKE YOUR VOTE COUNT!



This is a very important time for Ku-ring-gai residents.

After installing a Liberal Government in 2011, we have seen little change to the rampant destruction of our environment and local character. In fact there has been no real change to the tactics employed by the previous Labor Government.

There have been many broken promises made by this Government and specifically by Barry O'Farrell to Ku-ring-gai residents, from returning planning powers to local government, to abiding by a maximum 10,000 new dwell-

ings for Ku-ring-gai up until 2031 (see page 2). NSW Planning remains a potentially destructive force for Ku-ring-gai and as such FOKE has for the past 2 years worked with the Better Planning Network (BPN) to stop the previous outrageous legislation which would have taken away the rights of residents while increasing the rights and power of developers and state government.

With the BPN we have produced a community charter for good planning in NSW, called *Planning for the People*. The summary document is enclosed with this edition of *FOKE Talk*.

You can sign the enclosed copy to support the Charter and mail to the FOKE address on page 2, or you can sign online at thecompanycharter.org, where you will also find more information about the Charter. Currently we are approaching all Ku-ring-gai electoral candidates to also sign.

STAY INFORMED

The election is 28 March 2015. Things will now move quickly. Stay in touch with developments: Like us on Facebook and/or join our email mailing list today. See page 2 for details. ■

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Despite FOKE's and BPN's victory in stalling NSW Government's 2013 pro-development planning legislation, FOKE remains concerned that more unsupported planning decisions will simply be put on hold until after this coming election in March. If re-elected, the State Government will only renew its vigour in promulgating its pro-development agenda, as indicated by NSW Planning Minister Pru Goward's recent announcement which aims to make way for an additional 1.6 million people in Sydney by 2031.

If we elect politicians who are driven by developers rather than residents, by short term economic gain rather than long term ecological sustainability, then we have effectively approved the destruction of our own environment. Elect only officials who will agree and support a sensible and balanced approach to planning for NSW. In another 4 years so much more will be lost of our heritage and environment!

Kathy Cowley

BACK-ROOM DEALS AND BROKEN PROMISES: NSW ELECTION 2015

“...the NSW Liberal Government continues to accelerate environmental destruction...”

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Foke Talk

Comments or contributions of articles and photographs are welcome.

Let's look at some of NSW Liberal's broken promises:

Promise 1: "Returning planning powers to the people". But in power....The Planning Minister tried to introduce legislation to take away more of our rights of objection. The Minister left us with two major Labor approved sites for high-rise (Lindfield Ave and Avon/Beechworth Rd). The Planning Assessment Commission rules in more than 90% of cases in favour of developers.

Promise 2: "Maximum number of new dwellings by 2031 in Ku-ring-gai would remain at 10,000". But in power.... Former Minister Hazzard has publicly stated that Ku-ring-gai would not be limited to 10,000.

Promise 3: "Commitment to conserving NSW's unique national parks and wildlife." But in power.... Abolished the Dept of Environment, Climate Change and Water. Funding for the Environment Defender's Office stripped. Weakened and abandoned forest and woodland protections. Rolled back marine sanctuaries. Allowed the 10-50 tree clearing laws to cut down thousands of trees across NSW.

Promise 4: "Ensure mining cannot occur in any water catchment area." But in power.... Allowed the expansion of coal and coal seam gas mining in water catchments, public forests and rich agricultural land.

Promise 5: "The NSW Liberals and Nationals will be an honest Government." But in power.... To date three Liberal politicians have been questioned by ICAC about corrupt conduct,

with Mr O'Farrell resigning as Premier for misleading statements.

SOMETHING BETTER FOR NSW AND KU-RING-GAI

It is now obvious that despite announcements and promises to the contrary there is little difference between the two major parties on all planning matters.

The NSW Liberals came into power in 2011 on the promise of transparency and good governance. Yet the NSW Independent Commission Against Corruption (ICAC) Inquiry, during the NSW Liberal's term, reveals the same kinds of political backroom deals, scandals and favours to the property developers, big business and mining lobbyists.

Regrettably both parties favour a policy of economic growth fuelled by high-rise development and an over-heated property market. Both parties have a record of putting pressure on local councils to increase housing numbers and rezone for more high density.

The Premier continues to send messages of support to the property development industry assuring them that he will deliver what they want – massive profits guaranteed by legislation that allows them to build even greater high-rise apartments. As well they are supported by the selling of publically owned lands, buildings, assets and outsourcing public services particularly in regulation and enforcement e.g to private certifiers.

Your Vote Is Important

By working with the BPN we have already had a significant win.

Your vote can help keep up that momentum for better planning across Ku-ring-gai and all of NSW. In the recent past we have seen politicians sit up and take notice when they feel that their electorate support is reducing.

The real concern is whether decisions that are likely to be unpalatable to the community, if known prior to the election, are simply being put on hold until after the election.

If re-elected with a strong majority, the State Government will most likely continue its pro-development agenda. Planning Minister Goward has announced, in December 2014, a Metro Strategy that aims to make Sydney one of the fastest growing cities in the world.

Please support the Community Charter we are including with this newsletter. FOKE, and all the BPN groups across NSW are asking candidates to sign and adhere to this Charter so that NSW, and Sydney, will have a better planning regime for ALL stakeholders for the future. ■

ELECTION 2015: STAY INFORMED

👉 Join our mailing list by emailing a note to: info@foke.org.au

👉 Regularly visit our website: www.foke.org.au

👉 Like our Facebook page: [friendsokuringgaienvironment](https://www.facebook.com/friendsokuringgaienvironment)

TROJAN HORSE TO REVEAL COUNCIL AMALGAMATIONS

Fears are growing rapidly among NSW Councils that a new \$1 billion State government package deal tied to reforms is a "Trojan horse" for council amalgamations in the lead up to the March 2015 State election.

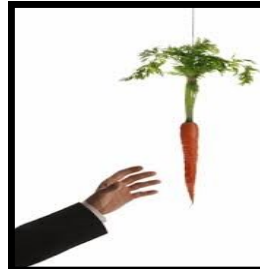
Ku-ring-gai Council has previously been opposed to amalgamation, however this now appears to be changing.

Premier Mike Baird recently dangled a swag of incentives in front of

councils, including the 'holy grail' for all councils: more rate-setting flexibility, alongside cheaper loan finance; greater planning powers; priority access to state funding and grants and a wad of cash to help any councils that want to merge. But there is a catch: local governments must first prove they are "Fit for the Future".

To get the goodies, councils must prove they are fit, and complete a self-assessment by June 2015.

While the NSW government is saying they will not force amalgamation, it is expected they are waiting until after the elections in March 2015 to move closer to an amal-



FOKE is aware of Liberal sources in Ku-ring-gai who think amalgamation with Hornsby is likely to happen after the election.

It is FOKE's view that any amalgamations with surrounding Councils will diminish resources for Ku-ring-gai residents as well as reducing our representation.

Support FOKE by letting your Councillors and election candidates know your views against amalgamation of our Council.

KU-RING-GAI'S ENVIRONMENT TOO VALUABLE TO BE DESTROYED BY MORE BAD PLANNING DECISIONS

Ku-ring-gai's tall, magnificent remnant forests, bushland escarpments and gardens all contribute to making Sydney one of the most beautiful cities in the world. As such, it is too valuable for Sydney to lose. But like all environmentally sensitive areas across Sydney – it is under assault.

Polling shows voters want more environmental protections, not less. However this is dismissed by politicians and policy makers, who are captured by short-sighted, narrow, financial interests. They have yet to link a vibrant economy with a sustainable environment.

The blindness of contemporary Sydney's planning policies is their utter failure to consider the cumulative impacts of multiple re-zonings. Add the destructive 10/50 tree clearing code and reduced protections and the threats to Sydney's environment are alarming.

What is happening in Ku-ring-gai, is representative of what is happening across Sydney. The government's failure to embrace the principles of ecologically sustainable development (ESD) means that all areas of Sydney are open to environmental destruction.

The NSW Government's claims of financial sustainability simply equate to allowing massive numbers of high rise apartments being built. Local communities are left devastated with its trail of environmental destruction. In this climate of incrementing environmental loss, funding for Legal Aid services provided by the Environmental Defenders Office (EDO) NSW has been cut.



FREE FOKE HERITAGE GUIDED WALKS 2015:

Come and learn more about your area.

As part of the 2015 National Trust Heritage Festival, FOKE has arranged for 3 free educational walks in Ku-ring-gai.

* All walks are graded as easy and are led by a knowledgeable guide.

* All commence at 10am and finish by 12noon.

* Bookings essential: Ring (02) 9498 2402 or (02) 9498 7608.

* Bring a friend... or two!

☐ **Sunday 3 May 2015:** ANNIE WYATT WALK: This walk around Gordon will highlight the places that inspired Annie Wyatt, conservationist, tree lover and founder of the National Trust, to fight for Nature—a vision that continues to this day. Meet at Gordon Railway Station Ticket Office by 9.50am for a 10.00am departure.

☐ **Sunday 10 May, 2015:** SHELDON FOREST WALK: Walk through Turramurra's Sheldon Forest—the last parcel of Blue Gum High Forest remaining in public land. This walk celebrates how this rare, original forest contributes to making Sydney such an exceptional and unique city. Meet at Sheldon Forest entrance, Warragal Road, Turramurra, by 9.50am for a 10.00am departure.

☐ **Sunday 17 May, 2015:** TURRAMURRA HERITAGE WALK: Walk through Turramurra's unique village that highlights Turramurra's indigenous, Federation and Interwar history with its unique architecture, community garden, and magnificent remnant forests. Meet at Turramurra Railway Station Ticket Office by 9.50am for a 10.00am departure.

FOKE IN 2014: PEOPLE POWER IN ACTION

By banding together with other groups around NSW and in Ku-ring-gai to fight the developer-driven planning legislation changes, FOKE and you—our members—have made a significant difference to what is occurring in our environment.



FOKE members protest changes to the Clearing Code in 2014.

Here are some of our major projects from 2014 in review.

Legislation halted

FOKE, as part of the 470 groups associated with the Better Planning Network, were able to stall the proposed developer-driven legislation in the Upper House. Thousands of letters and protests at the then Premier's office, calls and meetings with the Upper House representatives by FOKE and BPN resulted in a range of amendments to the proposed legislation. From early 2014, the pressure was maintained until the proposed legislation was withdrawn.

Gordon Golf Club redevelopment

With the Gordon Golf Club group, we have assisted, supported, attended workshops and spoken against the initial proposal of allocating a large part of the Golf course for residential development. The initial plans have been halted and a

new Master Plan for a Regional Park is currently being planned, now based on recreational facilities as its main objective.

Lindfield high-rise stalled

FOKE has objected on your behalf to the extension of the high rise developments in Lindfield Ave initially zoned for seven storey development in 2002 under the previous Labor government. Objections, submissions and presentations were made by FOKE to the Planning Assessment Commission. The second eight storey mixed commercial residential development 43-55 Lindfield Avenue has been rejected by the Land and Environment Court, following submissions made by FOKE, Council and others due to the potential destruction of three endangered Sydney Turpentine trees protected under NSW legislation.

Amendments to the 10/50 Clearing Code

The irresponsible and rushed legislation by the State Government of the 10/50 Clearing Code allowing tree removal within 300 metres of bushfire zones has been recently amended to 100 metres, due to widespread public outcry of its misuse. Thousands of letters objecting to the Code from FOKE and most other community groups around Sydney have caused the State Government to review this environmentally dangerous measure. We remain active calling for a moratorium while the review is completed.

Fighting for retention of our public assets

We continue to fight the Council's sale and re-development of community owned land which has now increased to over 23 assets: Culworth Ave Car Park, the Lindfield Library site, the Gordon Community Pre-school, the Lifeline building, the Ku-ring-gai Town Hall and Catholic Presbytery and other community land which is being reclassified to 'operational' to enable Council to sell it off. Council's purchase of the SUN building in Gordon for a new administration building has left Council with a mounting \$30 million debt. These community assets once sold will no longer be available for future uses and highlights a short term opportunistic approach by Council. ■

By maintaining your membership to FOKE, and heeding calls to action, you have directly contributed to these successes. Thank you!



Cartoon: Cathy Wilcox, Fairfax

JAN LANGLEY PRIZE FOR 2014

The Jan Langley Prize was again awarded to an outstanding student from Lindfield East Public School who committed themselves to environmentally beneficial tasks including recycling activities, and the maintenance of gardens and chickens at the school. The prize was presented to Isobel Bowes by Mr Philip Langley at the Year 5 Assembly in December 2014.

Culworth Avenue, Killara, CARPARK Update

Less than half of the original carpark (60 of the 174 spaces) has now been sold to Transport NSW for commuter parking. In the absence of TransportNSW purchasing the remainder of the site, Council is pushing ahead with plans for another public hearing to alter the heritage boundaries and increase the permitted building height to 5 stories on the remainder of the site.

Where are current and future commuters going to park once the remaining 114 spots are gone? Once sold, and with an expanding population, this area will not be recoverable for future commuter parking. Please take some time to remind your elected representatives (Councillors, State MPs and Transport Minister Berejiklian) that their constituents and voter base, are those same commuters who rely on Culworth Avenue Car Park. With the State Election in the offing, the time is ripe to make our voices heard. ■