



Win!  
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# FOKE Talk

## HIGH DENSITY NOT SYDNEY'S CHOICE



### Planning in New South Wales is at the crossroads writes Tony Resci, President of Save Our Suburbs.

Chris Johnson, Chief Executive of the Urban Taskforce (an organisation representing property developers) laments the fact that the NSW Government's proposed new planning legislation has been derailed ("Public interest tuned out in city-suburb battle", *Domain* Jan 11-12).

He implies that a boom in apartment approvals is a result of consumer demand and that opposition to this is mere NIMBY reaction. Whilst there

will always be people that resist any kind of change, to blame "NIMBYism" for the community resistance to high density apartments is disingenuous.

### Government policy

A multitude of academic surveys have shown that the overwhelming preference by Sydneysiders is for single-residential living rather than apartments.

Additionally, a widely-based association of community groups, including Save Our Suburbs, recently conducted a survey with over 1000 respondents in many

electorates which showed 96% of people believe high rise apartments must not replace family homes in low density suburbs.

The reason for the quoted boom in apartment approvals is primarily due to government policy. Choice has been compromised. To drive people into high-density living the State Government reduced the release of new housing sites from a historic 10,000 per year average to less than 2,000.

*Continues page 2...*

## PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

2014 will mark the 20th Anniversary since the formation of FOKE in 1994. We thank all our members for your wonderful support, encouragement and assistance over the past 20 years.

The FOKE Committee will continue to work hard on behalf of members and the Ku-ring-gai community for many more years.

We can only do this with the support of a strong, committed and viable membership.

Please enjoy this edition of the Newsletter and I refer you to our insert—an updated list of decision maker contacts as well as a letter BPN are requesting to be sent.

We are always keen to welcome new members to FOKE. If you have new residents in your area, please mention FOKE to them. They can get more information and membership forms from our website.

Regards,  
Kathy Cowley

**“We face the sobering prospect of the young and underprivileged never being able to own their own home...”**

## FOKE

FRIENDS OF KU-RING-GAI ENVIRONMENT INC.

Est. 1994  
PO Box 403  
Killara NSW 2071

Ph: 9416-9007  
www.foke.org.au

### Committee:

President: Kathy Cowley  
Treasurer: Dinah Warner  
Secretary: Katrina Pickles  
Ursula Bonzol  
Carolyn Darby  
Janet Harwood  
Janine Kitson  
Jean Posen  
Tanya Wood

Facebook:  
friendsofkuringgai



NEWSLETTER  
Contributions or  
Comments:  
fokenewsletter@gmail.com

## HIGH DENSITY NOT SYDNEY'S CHOICE *CONTINUED*

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The ensuing cumulative shortage has resulted in insufficient houses being made available to meet demand, driving a frightening escalation in housing costs.

### Sydney v Vancouver

Mr Johnson compares Sydney with Vancouver where similar policies were applied and it is now second to Hong Kong in having the most unaffordable housing in 337 metro markets surveyed (Sydney is in the unenviable position of being third-most unaffordable). Far from improving transport, high-density in Vancouver has resulted in the 14th worst traffic congestion of 197 large metro areas surveyed in the US, Europe and Canada.

### No need to cram

Although in higher densities a slightly greater percentage of people use public transport, this is completely overwhelmed by the greater number of people now crammed into a given area. They still have to use their cars where direct public transport

does not reach their destination or when public transport is unsuitable. What is more, per person energy use in Australian high-density is double that of single residential according to a 2005 study by Energy Australia and the Department of Planning.

There is plenty of room to expand Sydney on degraded farmland, say along the road to Goulburn. The area of the Sydney basin is 44,000km<sup>2</sup> while the area of current Sydney contiguous development is only about 1,800km<sup>2</sup>. A mere 20km<sup>2</sup> is used for vegetable production.

The median dwelling price in Sydney is a whopping \$650,000 of which the land component constitutes 70% of the cost.

We face the sobering prospect of the young and the underprivileged never being able to own their own home. This is due to the high cost of land which results from the State Government's restrictive planning policies.



Tony Recsei

Parliamentarians are realising that the community cannot just be tuned out using sham consultation. In the group survey previously mentioned, 91% of people do not believe that their MP is effective in addressing planning issues.

The fate of the NSW planning legislation shows that the high density emperor has no clothes. ■

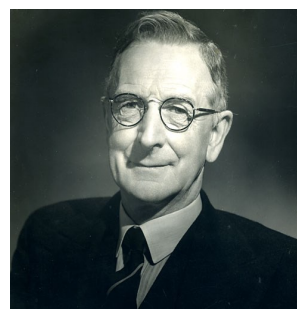
**Mr Tony Recsei is an environmental consultant and President of Save Our Suburbs. This is an edited version of an article which first appeared in *The Sydney Morning Herald* Jan 18-19 2014.**

## LOCAL HERO TO RECEIVE FITTING TRIBUTE

2015 marks the centenary of the Anzac landing at Gallipoli and in a fitting tribute, Kur-Ing-gai Council has passed a motion to dedicate what we currently know as the UTS Oval at the UTS site in Lindfield to C. E. W. Bean, to honour one of Kur-Ing-gai's most well known residents and Australia's most respected war historian and correspondent.

During World War I, Bean was in the trenches and at the front-lines for the *Sydney Morning Herald*. He was very instrumental in creating what we know today as the 'Anzac legend',

and is still one of our most widely read historians with his *Official History of Australia in the War of 1914-1918*. Bean also was very active in local conservation for many years and played a key role in the



establishment of the Australian War Memorial.

The dedication will be extra special for FOKE members, as Bean's granddaughter is past President of FOKE and community activist Anne Carroll.

FOKE put forward the dedication proposal to Council with help and encouragement from retired Army personnel and the Ku-ring-gai Historical Society. ■

## KU-RING-GAI—BIRTHPLACE OF SYDNEY'S ENVIRONMENT MOVEMENT

BOOK REVIEW BY JANINE KITSON

**Ku-ring-gai is a place of environmental splendour thanks to the conservationists described in this book: Peggy James' *Cosmopolitan Conservationists—Greening Modern Sydney*.**

The chapters that are of particular interest for Ku-ring-gai are on architect Walter Burley Griffin whose town planning principles influenced Ku-ring-gai as garden suburbs; Charles Bean, who advocated for the critical role of public open space, and Annie Wyatt who promoted the importance and beauty of Australian native trees.

This book demonstrates just how significant Ku-ring-gai is to the history of the environment movement. These visionaries and their networks were acutely aware that much was

needed to be done to stop the rapid degradation and destruction of Sydney's natural heritage.

It is a timely reminder of how plague, pollution, poverty and overcrowding confronted inner city Sydney in the 1890s and how this shaped an agenda for environmental reform for a greener, cleaner more beautiful 20th century—the 'garden city' movement for Sydney.

The 'garden city' vision for Sydney valued its bushland, trees, wildflowers, Aboriginal and European heritage, and its forests, lagoons and coastlines. In many ways, these conservationists were the 'critical mass' of their generation who successfully campaigned to achieve many initiatives. The final chapters of

the book poignantly describe how, even up to the 1960s, there were once intact, healthy bushland areas close to Sydney.

This book provides the background on how the green 'garden city' movement was jettisoned to be replaced by the modern paradigm of growth at all costs. ■



### WIN A COPY!

Thanks to the publisher, Australian Scholarly Publishing, two lucky FOKE members have a chance to win their own copy of this fascinating book.

Please provide your name, address, and tell us in 25 words or less why you love Ku-ring-gai. Send this to: [foke-newsletter@gmail.com](mailto:foke-newsletter@gmail.com) or on the back of a postcard to FOKE, PO Box 403, Killara, NSW, 2071. Entries close on March 31st, 2014.

To purchase *Cosmopolitan Conservationists—Greening Modern Sydney* for the RRP of \$39.95 please contact the publisher at [www.scholarly.org](http://www.scholarly.org) or on (03) 9329 6963.

## URBAN BIODIVERSITY—CAN IT SURVIVE OUR PLANNING LAWS? BY JANET HARWOOD

The Environmental Baseline Study completed by Ku-ring-gai Council in 2000 describes Ku-ring-gai as a unique combination of soils, topography, vegetation and fauna habitats with steeply sloping lands and watercourses which provide "a diverse range of habitats for flora and fauna species". So what is happening to the planning of this special place of intertwined natural and built heritage?

To understand this, we must look at the flaws at work in the planning system. One flaw is each re-zoning and each development is assessed in isolation. The cumulative impact on the environment is not assessed.

If there is also no assessment of the removal of seed-bank and soils of endangered communities or species, then it is only logical that the rich diversity of plants and animals that *The Environmental Baseline Study and the Biodiversity Strategy* recorded in 2000 will inevitably and irreversibly disappear over the next 20-50 years.

The creeping carpet of concrete is only possible because soils and seed-bank in the areas most favoured by the ancient forests, is being 'mined' and trucked away. This allows the massive footprints of unaffordable and often poor quality apartments to be built. Many of these apartments are built for the investment market with overseas owners. So we are trading rare, urban biological diversity for concrete.

The significance of this loss to a future city has not yet been grasped by decision-makers. The current government criticised but, importantly, refused to repeal, the previous government's destructive Ku-ring-gai LEP194 (2004). This re-zoning was gazetted without a proper environmental study for environmentally sensitive areas (ESAs).

The destructive footprint of KLEP194 has meant small suburbs, like Killara, Pymble and Wahroonga, which are not Town Centres, will continue to be transformed by massive, look-a-like apartments, swallowing up gardens full of endangered seed-bank and soils.

Future developments such as more apartments for St Ives, Lindfield and Turramurra, the SAN Hospital significant project in Wahroonga village, the UTS development project in the village of Lindfield, the Planning Assessment Commission residential project plan (MP08\_0207 and MP10\_0219) in the heart of environmentally sensitive remnant Blue Gum High Forest in Pymble, the Pymble Business Park project, and the continued un-assessed loss of soils, seed-bank and significant vegetation, through zoning for dual occupancy.

This means not only are flaws in the planning system not being recognized, but also that Ecologically Sustainable Development (ESD) has been turned into Financially Sustainable Development, demonstrating a legacy of great loss of environment for future generations. ■



## CULWORTH AVENUE CARPARK UPDATE: WALSH REPORT IS RELEASED

**The Independent Chairman of the public hearing into the Culworth Avenue Car Park, Peter Walsh, has completed and submitted his report, dated 6 January, 2014. There were 217 submissions to the public hearing and 5,000-6,000 signatures to a petition opposing the reclassification and sale of the car park.**



FOKE President Kathy Cowley makes a submission to the Chairman, Peter Walsh regarding the Culworth Avenue car park. *Photo: The Daily Telegraph.*

The report is into the Council's proposal to reclassify the land from community to operational land, thereby paving the way for the monstrous apartments in this heritage precinct of Killara.

Mr Walsh agrees that the Council has essentially ignored the community benefit issue and is critical of the very poor usage surveys used by Council to justify the sale of the car park, and the suggestion that public parking would be provided in any future development, if economically feasible.

His recommendation is that the reclassification not proceed until and unless the following four requirements are addressed:

1. More genuinely recognise the community benefits of the current site, especially in regard to those with a disability

and seniors- a growing group in our community (as identified in the Community Strategic Plan);

2. Provide an enhanced picture of the overall community benefit of a reclassification and sale;

3. Demonstrate how this exceeds the current community benefit, for example by drawing relationships to Council's wider program of planning and community service and demonstrating a long term benefit to the wider Ku-ring-gai community;

4. Detail any conditions which would be prerequisites for the land sale, including local community considerations such as replacement parking strategies, support for higher needs groups, special planning controls, processes for preparation of a development strategy or masterplan, phasing of parking availability, continuing civic engagement on this matter and expected fiscal outcomes.

FOKE and all other stakeholders are now waiting for the report to be received by Council and the reporting back of the Chair's recommendations and the actions to follow. You can read the report in its entirety by going to the Council's website. It takes some clicking to get to it but if you search for *Planning Proposal to reclassify 20-28 Culworth Avenue* you will find it. ■

### KEY OBJECTIONS TO THE RECLASSIFICATION OF CULWORTH AVE CAR PARK:

1. *The negative community impact of the combined loss of existing parking and the proposed high rise residential development with rezoning;*

2. *The car park is currently used by older people and those with mobility problems unable to park a kilometre or more away and walk to the station;*

3. *The proposal has been driven by the need to fund the purchase of 828 Pacific Hwy Gordon, when the two policy issues should have been considered separately. Council has not properly demonstrated that the site is underutilised, and the process does not attempt to meet the community benefit test.*

*Mr Walsh says the reclassification proposal should have to stand on its own merits.*



Peter Walsh. *Photo: The Daily Telegraph.*

## 2013 JAN LANGLEY PRIZE PRESENTATION

The Jan Langley Prize at Lindfield East Public School for environmental and sustainability excellence for 2013 was presented to Year 6 student Kathryn Fung during the Awards Ceremony on 12 December, 2013 in the presence of parents, teachers and community leaders. It was a joyous occasion celebrating how our young Kur-ing-gai citizens embrace their enthusiasm for our unique environment which is abundantly on display at this lovely school. Lindfield East Public School has a very active 'Green Team' who look after the school's vegetable patch and chicken coup and the school are active recyclers.

FOKE members will fondly recall Jan Langley as a long time committee member who was active in many aspects of community care and heritage protection and had a significant association with Lindfield East Public School. The inaugural Jan Langley Prize for sustainability and environmental excellence was first awarded in 2012, the year Jan sadly passed away, and is an ongoing, appropriate tribute to this remarkable Kur-ing-gai resident. ■