

# FOKE Talk

## More Community Rights Reduced Under Libs

On 9 January 2017, the NSW Planning Minister released a proposal updating the Environmental Planning and Assessment Act (EP&A Act).

The biggest concern is that the proposed changes to the legislation are likely to set up a planning system that further erodes the role of councils and elected representatives in local planning decisions and diminishes the rights of the community to have a say on the local developments that affect them most.

Some key concerns are:

- The proposed **Local Planning Panels** (which will comprise two experts and a community representative) have concerning aspects. Most significantly, it appears elected representatives have been purposely excluded from acting as community representatives on these panels. The Planning Minister will be able to impose panels on councils with, no clear criteria to allow this decision. There is a danger of arbitrary decisions and political interference.
- There are two key **changes to local plan making powers** – requirements for community participation plans and local strategic planning statements. Most councils already have community participation plans (the requirements for which can also be met by community strategic plans).

The requirement to obtain signoff for local strategic planning statements (from the Department of Planning and Environment or the Greater Sydney Commission) reinforces an already top-down plan-making process. **This proposal essentially negates any council or community engagement in these plans.** The proposed system is too directive and doesn't give councils adequate opportunity to incorporate local knowledge and expertise in plan-making, eroding the input, characteristics and amenity of local communities.

- The proposed **expansion of complying development** to include medium-density housing is problematic as it effectively gives the green light for 'tick-a-box' development without consultation. As discussed in our December 2016 newsletter, these complying developments would include rows of townhouses and 2 storey flats within residential areas.
- The proposal to standardise the process of **voluntary planning agreements (VPAs)** is one the community will need to look at closely. It is important councils retain the power and flexibility to negotiate these in ways that are of genuine benefit to communi-



ties. The point of VPAs is that they provide a means of delivering local infrastructure and amenity required by law. The law needs to remain neutral and fair so councils can negotiate outcomes that improve and maintain liveability in communities undergoing densification.

Overall the proposed changes will allow NSW Planning to dictate plans to local councils, including changes in zones and density. Local communities and their councils can be disregarded in favour of Government appointed panels. It is a removal of our rights as residents in our communities, and more importantly, another removal of local democracy by this Liberal Government.

**ACT NOW- Your Voice is important**  
 The proposed changes to the EP&A Act are on public exhibition until March 10. Please take the time to submit your concerns. See <http://www.planning.nsw.gov.au/Policy-and-Legislation/Legislative-Updates>

## PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Dear Members,

While we have all been trying to relax over the holidays the 2016 Minister for Planning Rob Stokes MP announced even more 'top down' plans to change the planning system and the Environmental Planning and Assessment Act 1979 (EP&A Act).

The past three years has seen an unprecedented number of incremental reforms impacting development in NSW. The cumulative impact of each reform is quite revolutionary (not evolutionary) and all this change is happening with minimal community input or consultation, contrary to what we were promised by our Members of Parliament.

And now, in January 2017, we have another Planning Minister, Anthony Roberts, the previous Energy Minister. We are yet to hear what his approach to planning will be.

Under the new legislation proposed by NSW Planning, major and significant changes have also been announced to the Local Government Act 1993 (LGA)

One of the key environmental and planning changes is the absence of the requirement for councils to have regard to the principles of ecological sustainable development (ESD) in carrying out council's responsibilities, and its removal from the principles of local government. The effect of this is to drive economic development rather than ecologically sustainable development. This was the same criteria that brought down the Hazzard Planning Reforms in 2013. We require ecological-

ly sustainable development to ensure a healthy and liveable city!

The other major change is the creation of a whole new bureaucracy in the Greater Sydney Commission (GSC) through the Greater Sydney Commission Act 2015. Disturbingly, many of the Minister's functions now have been delegated to the GSC. The draft District Plans for Greater Sydney were released late last year and will be on exhibition until 31 March. We continue to pressure the Northern District Commissioner Deborah Dearing for the community and community groups to be consulted on these plans.

2016 Planning Minister Stokes in a Sydney Morning Herald interview on May 6 2016, claimed that "the government had learnt from the experience (2013 failed Planning Reforms) and had jettisoned contentious reforms like "code assessment", which fast-tracked complying development with limited community objection rights." He also told Fairfax media that "the contentious proposal to replace "ecologically sustainable development" with "sustainable development" has been dumped, as has the idea of axing state environmental planning policies." All things he now has introduced again! One needs to ask will new Minister Roberts listen to the community instead of developers and embrace sound planning principles?

We understand there are even more changes and a more

comprehensive Planning Bill with further substantive amendments to the EP&A Act to be announced this year!

2017 will see FOKE continuing to be active and work for our community. Your renewal of your membership to FOKE will continue to assist us, as there is much work to do in attempting to mitigate and prevent the worst planning and environmental outcomes for Ku-ring-gai.

Kind regards

*Kathy Cowley*

### ADVANCE NOTICE FOKE AGM

The FOKE AGM will be on **Wednesday 24 May 2017** at the Uniting Church Hall, Killara 6.30 pm. Details to follow.

### ACT NOW

PUBLIC SUBMISSIONS  
CLOSE 31 MARCH

Greater Sydney Commission  
**North District Plan**  
Public Exhibition

These will be the plans for Ku-ring-gai for the next 5 years.

FOKE will post submission points on FOKE website and by email before the end February.

You can read the entire draft

District Plan at

[www.greater.sydney](http://www.greater.sydney)

& send feedback: via

[www.greater.sydney](http://www.greater.sydney), by email: [engagement@gsc.nsw.gov.au](mailto:engagement@gsc.nsw.gov.au) or

by post: Greater Sydney Commission Draft North District Plan PO Box 257, Parramatta NSW 2124

# High Density, Poor Health

By Tony Recsei

The proponents of high-density planning promulgate a variety of baseless assertions to support their beliefs. They claim that from a health and happiness perspective there is a need to increase population densities.

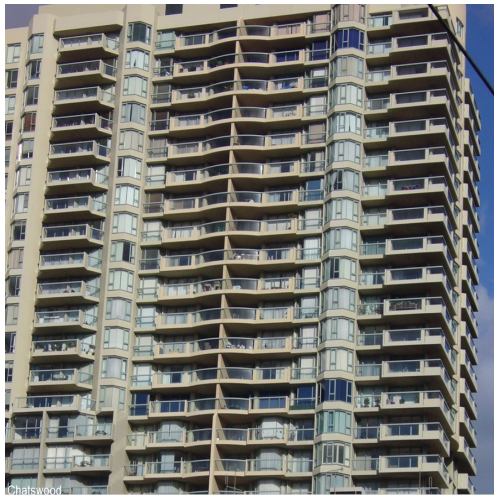
An article appeared in the Sydney Morning Herald (SMH) of 21 January 2017 with the heading "Urban sprawl drives us to hospital". It displayed data that showed that obesity, type II diabetes and deaths from cardiovascular disease are greater in lower density suburbs such as Blacktown, Campbelltown and Penrith. It stemmed from an interview with the Committee for Sydney, the members of which are predominantly developers or other organisations advocating high-density in some way.

**The SMH article is highly misleading and biased.** We know that the lower-density suburbs mentioned with the greatest health problems are also the poorest and the lowest educated. These and many other factors can explain the findings. Proper statistical methods should be used in studies of this nature to separate out the effects of each variable.

There are numerous studies on human health that show the adverse association with high-density living of mental illness, children's health, respiratory disease, heart attacks, cancer and human happiness. Unlike the SMH article these studies have been properly performed, isolating these factors from individual demographic and socio-economic characteristics.

A monumental Swedish study of over four million individuals found that the rates for psychosis (such as the major brain disorder schizophrenia) are 70% greater for the denser areas. There was also a 16% greater risk of developing depression.

A study of 350,000 people in Holland found that the prevalence of depression and anxiety was significantly greater for those living in areas with only 10% green space in their surroundings compared to those with 90% green space.



An Australian study of raising young children in apartments notes there is a lack of safe active play space outside the home – many parks and other public open spaces offer poor security. Frustrated young children falling out of apartment windows can be a tragic consequence. Children living in apartments enter school with poorly developed social and motor skills.

**There is an inverse association between overall human happiness and density.** Professor Cummins' Australian Unity Wellbeing Index reports that the happiest electorates have a lower population density. There are similar findings from research in the United States and New Zealand.

**Evidence from a variety of sources points to greater human happiness and better health in lower densities - the exact opposite of the claims of the advocates for "cramming" people into ever smaller places.**

We need to be highly suspicious of the propaganda from special interest groups and Sydney's own Greater Sydney Commission!



## Amalgamation Update

With the advent of a new NSW Premier, the heat is on again to stop the undemocratic forced council amalgamations.

On Sunday 22<sup>nd</sup> January, representatives of community groups, councillors and ex Mayors attended a media conference organised by Save our Council's Coalition. Members of Parliament and local councillors were among the speakers, again demanding that this policy is overthrown immediately.

With Premier Berejiklian reconsidering forced council amalgamations now is the time to continue to pressure our local representatives to stop the merger of Kurung-gai Council with Hornsby. Please call on Jonathon O'Dea & Alister Henskins to act now.

### FRIENDS OF KU-RING-GAI ENVIRONMENT INC.

*Established 1994*

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Ursula Bonzol

Carolyn Darby

Janet Harwood

Denise Hendy

Kerrie Piper

Tanya Wood



**Facebook: [Friendsokuringgai](https://www.facebook.com/friendsokuringgai)**

# Celebrating Heritage Festival 2017

## Blue Gum High Forest Walk @ Gordon

Sunday 30 April, 2017

Meet 9.45am for 10am start. Finish at 12noon

This ecologically focused walk will explore Gordon's past and present Blue Gum High remnant forest and consider its future. The walk will highlight Ku-ring-gai's Indigenous, colonial, Victorian, Federation, Inter-war and post WW2 environmental history. Bring hat, water, snack and wear good walking shoes. Meet in front of Gordon Railway Station Ticket Office.

## Blue Gum High Forest Walk @ St Ives

Sunday 7 May, 2017

Meet 9.45am for 10am start. Finish at 12noon

Celebrate the 10<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of saving St Ives Blue Gum High Forest, when the community rallied and the land was brought into public ownership. This walk will be led by Nancy Pallin, former Chair of the Blue Gum High Forest Group that led the campaign to save the forest in 2007.

Meet at Rosedale Road entrance to Forest. Bring hat, water, snack and wear good walking shoes.

## Blue Gum High Forest Walk @ Turramurra to Pymble

Sunday 14 May, 2017, 10am-12noon

Walk from Turramurra to Pymble Station through its streets, its reserves and Sheldon Forest, one of Sydney's rare forests. Learn how the community continues to defend the endangered Blue Gum High Forest along Sydney's northern ridgeline that is both a critical bird and wildlife sanctuary as well as being so important for the health, wellbeing and safety for the future city of Sydney.

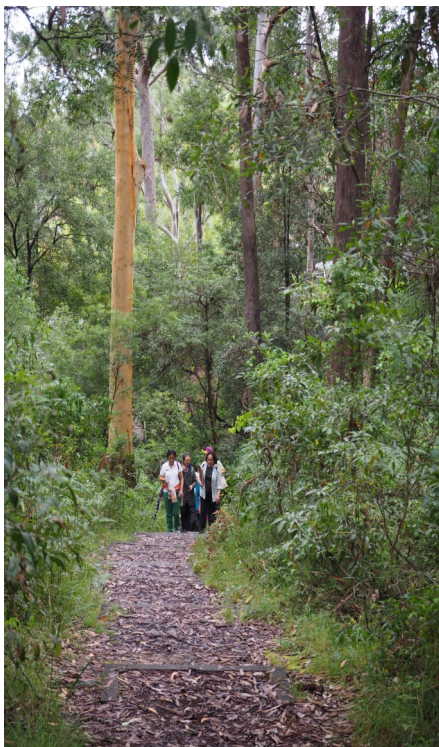
This is a long walk from Turramurra Station to Pymble Station and involves steep hills. Bring hat, water, snack and wear good walking shoes.

**Blue Gum High Forest Matters. Ku-ring-gai Matters. Fundraising Lunch for Environmental Defenders Office @ Pecorino Café, Gordon**  
Sunday 21 May, 2017, 12:45pm-3pm  
\$35

Enjoy a light lunch and coffee at the heritage Café Pecorino, on the east side of Gordon Railway Station, while listening to a range of speakers who will talk on why the Blue Gum High Forest matters so much for Ku-ring-gai.

Meet at 77 Werona Ave, Gordon 2072 NSW, short walk from Gordon Railway Station (on east side) Adults: \$35 Bookings Essential for catering purposes. Please contact regarding special Dietary Requirements

**Bookings Essential:** Bookings ring Janine Kitson (02) 9498 2402 or 0428 860 623 Email: [janine.kitson@tpg.com.au](mailto:janine.kitson@tpg.com.au)



BOOK REVIEW



## The House that Jack Built

*Jack Munday Green Bans Hero*  
by James Colman Pascoe  
Newsouth, 2016

This book celebrates Jack Munday's and the Builders Labourers' Federation's [BLF] achievements in saving so much of Sydney's heritage and environment during the 1970s.

The book is particularly timely when legislation to protect heritage and the environment are being severely wound back – and at a time when we are experiencing the threats of a climate emergency. The book exposes the greed that the privatisation agenda encourages when it transfers community ownership over to the big end of town and thus diminishes the wellbeing for future generations.

The book celebrates Jack Munday and the BLF's many achievements to save Sydney's Rocks, Glebe, and Woollahooloo areas. Kelly's Bush, at Hunters Hill, is now recognised by the international environmental movement for being the place where the world's first green ban took place.

Jack Munday brought the enlightened working class and enlightened middle class together to demand heritage and environment protections for the places we enjoy today. He also eloquently argued for the need for jobs that would not destroy the future generation's right to a beautiful world. A wonderful history that all Australians need to read!

**Get your friends to join FOKE Now!**  
**Ku-ring-gai Needs a Strong Voice**  
[www.foke.org.au](http://www.foke.org.au) Facebook: Friends of kuringgai

