

FOKE Talk

NSW's Catastrophic Summer Needs Action

New laws are urgently needed to protect Ku-ring-gai's bushland, forested landscapes and biodiversity.

Australia's unprecedented 2019-2020 bushfires have changed everything. Never before has Australia witnessed an 11,000km fire edge that has burnt so much of Eastern Australia. Never before have temperatures been so high or prolonged, such severe drought, and hazardous smoke haze blanketing our cities.

The scale of the recent bushfires is hard to comprehend, with over 5.4 million hectares of NSW impacted by bushfires since July 2019. More than a third of NSW's national parks and reserves have been burnt out, including Sydney's World Heritage listed Greater Blue Mountains National Park. Nationwide, 34 people have tragically died, 3500 homes burnt and an estimated billion wildlife obliterated. We now face the very real threat of extinction for many of our wildlife including our iconic koala.

FOKE has argued for many years that Ku-ring-gai, as an environmentally sensitive area, needs sensitive and controlled development. Already too much of Ku-ring-gai's natural environment has been destroyed by successive NSW Governments who have sponsored overdevelopment, without regard for long term impacts. Ku-ring-gai needs 'no go' zones, where development is prohibited, especially in its bushfire prone areas. East and West Killara and North and South Turrumurra are renowned as extreme bushfire danger



Courtesy Queensland Police

hotspots, yet they continue to be targeted for more development in the form of secondary dwellings.

Ku-ring-gai urgently needs new legislation to protect its many threatened and endangered species. Ku-ring-gai is a landscape prone to bushfire threat. It is time to place sustainable limits on future housing numbers. It is time to review and reverse the NSW Government's plans for increased high-medium housing throughout Ku-ring-gai, particularly on its ridge, which now retains less than 1% of our remnant Blue Gum High Forest, and where Sydney Turpentine Ironbark forests remain. It is time to put in place new planning laws that preserve and protect our unique environment – more important than ever when so much of NSW's environment is facing ecological collapse.

Despite decades of scientific warnings, successive govern-

ments have failed to take the decisive action on climate change. Climate change was predicted in the 2008 Garnaut report that warned, "Fire Seasons will start earlier, and later and be more intense. The effect increases over time but should be directly observable by 2020." Thankfully Matt Kean, NSW Environment Minister, has strongly promoted the need for action on climate change, at a time, when NSW was not only devastated by catastrophic bushfire but also wild storms. Lindfield, Killara and Gordon were badly hit in late 2019, with what residents describe as a 'mini-cyclone', causing tall gum tree trunks to snap in half, so ferocious were wind speeds.

We need our state Members of Parliament to take leadership and address the causes and consequences of climate change that will continue

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Dear Members

At the start of a new decade we extend to you and your family our best wishes for a healthy and enjoyable 2020.

This year will present the residents of Ku-ring-gai many new challenges which have been forced by the State Government through the powers granted to the Greater Sydney Commission to enable increased housing in Ku-ring-gai. Ku-ring-gai Council embarked on developing a new Ku-ring-gai Housing Development Strategy which will result in a new Local Environment Plan (LEP) for Ku-ring-gai.

Last year saw the start of the process of planning for thousands of additional dwellings in Ku-ring-gai, notwithstanding the fact that we had promises from our local MPs such as Jonathan O'Dea that he would ensure that Ku-ring-gai would not exceed the 10,000 dwellings as the target to 2031 as set by the Labor State Government in 2000. Ku-ring-gai has already exceeded this total by over 2000 dwellings.

FOKE has made written submissions with respect to the Draft Local Strategic Planning Statement and attended the first workshop in December organized by Council to progress the residential development strategy. We have attended the February workshop which focuses on how the increased dwelling targets can best be met while still protecting Ku-ring-gai's character! The workshop covered how biodiversity, heritage and other factors are being considered and what housing options may be suitable.

But importantly, how many Ku-ring-gai households are aware that this new housing plan is progressing? Your State MPs Jonathan

O'Dea and Alister Henskens have not advised residents in their latest or earlier newsletters. Moreover, Ku-ring-gai Council has not written to residents as Council did with the earlier 2002 residential development strategy. Only those on Council's contact lists are being informed or those who have read the Mayor's column in the North Shore Times. One can only think that the community consultation is to meet process requirements rather than to inform or listen to the community as a whole!

With figures we have obtained from the Department of Planning, since 2004 over 12,000 new dwellings have been approved and 10,000 dwellings have been completed. We believe there are approximately 4000 new dwellings zoned and still not taken up in the 6 town centres remaining from the 2002 residential development housing strategy. None of the 6 targeted local business centres zoned areas have been taken up or developed with high density apartments apart from three sites in the Lindfield centre, since 2004!

We believe that before more residential land is rezoned for more high density dwellings, developers should be forced to take up the high density zoned land in the 6 town centres rather than destroying more of Ku-ring-gai's homes, heritage and environment which will surely be the outcome from the State Government's planning demands.

FOKE's major purpose this year will be involved with the ongoing strategic planning, to keep you informed about the residential housing strategy going forward and to encourage you to be involved. It will be important for members to participate if we want to ensure that we protect Ku-ring-gai from more unwarranted

overdevelopment. **Please make sure you have given us your email address, so that we can keep you informed.**

As we do at the start of every year we are enclosing the FOKE membership renewal form for 2020 and look forward to your continuing membership in our 26th year since our foundation in 1994.

Kind regards

Kathy Cowley

ADVANCE NOTICE FOKE AGM

Wednesday 20 May 2020
Uniting Church Hall, Killara
at 7.30 pm.

FRIENDS OF KU-RING-GAI ENVIRONMENT INC.

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Ku-ring-gai's Housing Strategy – *Council on Notice!*

Ku-ring-gai Council is preparing yet another Residential Housing Strategy, a planning process driven by the NSW Dept of Planning to periodically rezone more and more of our established garden suburbs for ever denser and taller apartment blocks.

As we have expressed in earlier Foke newsletter articles, Council is expected by the State Government to plan new housing for a population increase of 31,000 people from 2016 to 2036, this is another 25% increase or a total 50% increase in population since 2006!

This 'new' housing strategy is being completed via a series of community workshops that began last December. In total, approximately 15 workshops to gauge stakeholder views.

FOKE and other community groups have participated in these workshops and responses from the initial workshops have raised a number of concerns, that:

- Council decisions are being over-ridden, by the State Government, Sydney North Planning Panel and Land and Environment Court.
- Need to better protect the local character, heritage, and our 'green' environment.
- Development of the strategy should include accompanying studies on water, sewerage, traffic, parking and infrastructure; the need for affordable housing not just luxury units; the impact of overseas investment, where the local character is not valued or respected.
- Council is not addressing areas that require more urgent focus: new facilities, new parks, foot-

paths, run off, impacts of an increasing population, congestion and development of an urban forest strategy.

- Detached houses should remain the predominant dwelling type as this is the preference of residents.
- Preference for medium density (townhouses/villas) rather than high density (apartments) for new dwellings.

The timeline as published on the Ku-ring-gai Council website is that February will see the completion of the Community and Stakeholder workshops/focus groups, with the Draft Housing Strategy being presented for exhibition in April to May. Expected to be the required minimum 6 weeks, with finalisation in June 2020.

Where are the updated Baseline studies that were essential in the development of the last Residential Development Strategy in 2002?

The four baseline studies were Heritage and Neighbourhood Character, Infrastructure, Environment and Traffic and Transport Studies. The studies assisted council in planning this strategy and in protecting the heritage and the environment of Ku-ring-gai. The cumulative impact of the layering of development must be considered before planning for more development and whether it is ecologically sustainable.

Again and again our growth targets are being updated over short timeframes and approved growth not included in the revised targets.

Council has acknowledged that the 4000 new dwellings required for Ku-ring-gai as part of the North District Plan during the 5 year period from 2016 to 2021 will be met through existing approvals and zonings.

The net new dwelling targets for Ku-ring-gai are expected to be 10,660 to 2036. Excluding the 4,000 already agreed as deliverable, that leaves 6,660 net new dwellings remaining over the remaining 15 years.

If reasonably paced, this is 2,220 new dwellings per 5 year period across Ku-ring-gai.

FOKE contends that more than half of this can be dealt with under existing zoning, especially in and around town centres. As such only minimal, if any, rezonings will be required to reach the 2036 target.

We look forward to monitoring that Council adheres to the statement on their website, that they 'can deliver the additional dwellings while protecting and enhancing our much-loved local character'.

NSW's Catastrophic . . . *continued from page 1*

to profoundly affect the health and resilience of Ku-ring-gai's environment but also its residents' health and wellbeing.

Ku-ring-gai is one of the most biodiverse regions of Sydney. Its bushland and remnant forests are vital refuges for wildlife. With urban temperatures rising, Ku-ring-gai's role as the 'Green Heart of Sydney' is even more significant when Sydney had 81 days of hazardous bush-fire smoke.

New laws are needed to protect and enhance Ku-ring-gai's environment, biodiversity and protect residents from future climate disasters. Scientists have been warning government for years, that the rate of growth is unsustainable and that we are hitting our limits, creating 'superwicked' problems!



How serious is NSW wildlife recovery?

After years of pulling funds out of the National Parks and Wildlife Service, reducing staffing in environmental protection and downgrading the biodiversity protections in the NSW Biodiversity Conservation Act 2016, the NSW Government has ad-



Courtesy NPWS/DPIE

At least a quarter of key koala habitat has been lost in NSW. The platypus, grey-headed flying foxes and Booroolong frogs are feared to be at risk with a third of the Kosciuszko National Park burnt. Similarly, 26 threatened plant species have their entire area now fire-affected, leading to the need for urgent seed banking.

Some \$1 million in emergency funding has been set aside as part of a \$6.5 million investment to support the rescue and care of injured wildlife.

With the amount of devastation and recovery required, this level of funds appears completely inadequate...it should be

significantly higher. And still logging is allowed in Koala habitat in the north coast. And Mr Barilaro, Minister for Disaster Recovery, wants to raze and log national parks to prevent future fires!

ressed the need to act following the devastating loss of native animals as a result of this summer's bushfires.

The NSW government published its Wildlife and Conservation Bushfire Recovery plan in February and quickly commenced food drops for endangered species and removal of some feral animals as part of efforts to help save native plants and animals brought closer to extinction by the state's unprecedented bushfires.

Blazes have hit the habitat of 84 of the most vulnerable animals, while 46 threatened plant species have more than 90 per cent of their recorded range in fire zones.

Energy and Environment Minister Matt Kean told SMH that the fires have had "a devastating impact", with 37 per cent of the national parks estate burnt. He also stressed "protecting the remaining areas of unburnt habitat" was key for the "longer-term restoration and recovery" of species and landscapes across NSW.

Gordon Bowling Club Update

The Gordon Bowling Club was vacated by members and returned as Council owned land.

The Council planning proposal for the site was for R3, medium density development, which garnered objections from residents with FOKE also making a submission. The Planning Minister has amended Council's recommendation, making it R2 zoned, single residential dwellings, which is more in keeping with the surrounding area.

However, most residents lobbied for the site to be a park. The reclassification and exhibition period will take 12 months to finalise.

Join FOKE Now!

Call or email us or join online at www.foke.org.au

Congratulations to 2019's Prize winners

The Jean Posen Environment award given to a Lindfield Public School student who exhibits a passion for caring for the environment and improving sustainability practices. In 2019 the award went to Emily Baird.

It is with great sadness that we announce Phillip Langley passed away on Monday 17 February from liver cancer. Our thoughts and sincere condolences have been conveyed to his family.

The Jan Langley Sustainability prize is awarded to East Lindfield student, Zana Williams. Zana was a driver for sustainability in her school environment. The award was presented by Phillip Langley.



Zana Williams and Phillip Langley