

# FOKE Talk

## Higher Density: The Facts Don't Stack Up

By Tony Recsei, President, Save our Suburbs



Save Our Suburbs is alarmed at planning policies being introduced to force high-density into suburbs originally designed for low density living. The NSW Planning and Environment Department proceeds to implement these policies irrespective of the political party currently in government. The Department makes claims of benefits for its policies that do not stand up to analysis.

It maintains that high density is more sustainable. An Australian Conservation Foundation study has calculated annual greenhouse gas emissions per person living in each post code. This shows the annual national average for high-density areas is 27.9 tonnes per person, compared to 17.5 tonnes for low density areas. **High density is significantly less sustainable.**

The Department claims that high-density makes housing more **affordable**. But we have seen more affordable older or smaller apartment buildings and homes replaced by high-density luxury units, essentially removing the lower price stepping stones into the housing market.

To force an increasing population into

high-density the rate of land release on Sydney's periphery was severely curtailed. This resulted in a scarcity that pushed up housing prices, where the land cost component has now more than doubled. The beneficiaries of these excess costs are developers and the government, which receives higher stamp duties and other fees.

High-density results in the **degradation of the city's environment**. Gardens and remnant bushland are replaced by hard surfaces. City greenery which absorbs carbon dioxide and other pollutants and cool the city is vanishing. Rainwater, no longer absorbed by open ground, carries pollution into our rivers and ocean.

We were told that high-density would result in less car travel and its associated congestion and pollutants as everyone would use public transport. A 2004 Melbourne study which measured the percentage of car travel by people, before and after densification, found there was no resulting

change. People still use their cars and comparisons of world cities show that **the more density the more congestion**.

The Greater Sydney Commission (GSC) claims that with its vision of a Metropolis of Three Cities no one will be more than 30 minutes away from their jobs and public services. It assumes that currently most Sydney jobs are in the CBD and asserts this is what its Metropolis of Three Cities will change. But this assumption is incorrect. A 2018 study by the Grattan Institute finds that only 14.5% of jobs are currently in the CBD and the rest are spread throughout the city. The real situation is much more complicated than the Commission assumptions.

The Markelius plan for Stockholm is an example of a failed attempt to reduce travel by building high-rise dwellings and employment opportunities in centres. Only 15% to 24% of workers living in such centres worked there, the rest commuted out. In a democracy, one cannot dictate to people where they should live and work. Choices are made based on many individual factors. Yet the GSC uses its 3-city scenario as a justification to force high-density into communities.

There are examples of other planning possibilities. In the US, the fastest growing cities have lower densities, with resultant lower house prices and less congestion. Houston and Dallas-Fort Worth are both larger than Sydney, and are good examples of these better liveability measures.

**New South Wales needs to adopt a more open-minded and objective approach to planning and learn from others. And importantly, we need to use regulation sparingly and not to enforce the implementation of unproved ideology.**

## PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Dear Members,

We hope the start of the New Year has been good for you and that 2019 will be happy, healthy and fulfilling.

With two elections (State and Federal) this year there is a lot to ponder particularly the various election promises and policy platforms of each political party.

In terms of policy, there are some differences between Liberal and Labor's planning and environment policy platforms in NSW, which, we believe, remain heavily influenced by the property industry. We welcome the fact that more and more community groups are forming across Sydney to fight overdevelopment.

Whichever party wins, we will continue to push for Ku-ring-gai not to be forced to deliver more high-density housing. The Greater Sydney Commission's North District Plan currently proposes an additional 4,000 dwellings for Ku-ring-gai to 2021. Previous targets agreed by NSW Planning for our area have already been exceeded, and we must ensure this does not continue. **Over the course of two terms the Liberal state government has considerably weakened planning and environment policies to the point where good planning principles are no longer in evidence.**

We hope you will take the opportunity to support the Better Planning Network (BPN) Planning Charter [betterplanningnetwork.org.au/nsw\\_elections\\_2019](http://betterplanningnetwork.org.au/nsw_elections_2019) before the election. The BPN believes as do we, that NSW needs a fundamentally different planning system from the one that is currently operating. A system that is driven by Ecologically Sustainable Development principles and one that is fairer, more transparent and less open to corruption.

On a more positive note I am pleased to announce that FOKE

has substantially updated its website. The FOKE website address remains [www.foke.org.au](http://www.foke.org.au) I would like to thank committee member Ursula Bonzol for designing the new website with our website developer. We hope you like the new format. The website now links to our Facebook page and members will be able to register and book FOKE events online. The new format is compatible with all mobile devices and will enable us to manage and change information on the website more efficiently and easily.

I am also pleased to announce that FOKE's discussions with Macquarie University to offer an Environmental Studies prize have been finalised. I would like to thank committee member Katrina Pickles for drafting and preparing the nomination and liaising with the university in the establishment of the Award.

Our Sub-committee continues to work on the proposal to nominate the Ku-ring-gai Chase National Park for World Heritage Listing and we will update you as the work reaches its milestones.

As for some council news. Our congratulations to recently retired Councillor Elaine Malicki who was awarded the Order of Australia in the General Division (OAM) in the Australia Day Awards for her service to local government and to the community of Ku-ring-gai Council.

We enclose your membership renewal form for 2019. Please note, if you are making a direct deposit, that we are now banking with Westpac. We appreciate and value your continuing membership and look forward to receiving your renewal.

Our AGM and Public Meeting is on Wednesday 22 May at 7.30 pm at the Uniting Church, Killara. I look forward to seeing you there.

Kind regards

**Kathy Cowley**  
President

**FOKE celebrating  
25 years of caring  
for Ku-ring-gai!**



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

*Established 1994*

**PO Box 403**

**Killara NSW 2071**

**Tel: 9416-9007**

**Web: [www.foke.org.au](http://www.foke.org.au)**

**Email: [info@foke.org.au](mailto:info@foke.org.au)**

To ensure you are on our mailing list please write to us at the email address above.

President: Kathy Cowley

Vice-President: Janine Kitson

Treasurer: Kerrie Piper

Minutes Secretary:

Katrina Pickles

**Committee:**

Ursula Bonzol

Carolyn Darby

Janet Harwood

Denise Hendy

Dinah Warner

Tanya Wood

**Facebook:**

Friendsofkuringgai



**Join FOKE Now!**

Call or email us or join  
online at  
[www.foke.org.au](http://www.foke.org.au)

# Celebrating Nature

Guest speaker, Janine Kitson, FOKE Vice-President, presented at National Council of Women (NSW) Luncheon, NSW Parliament House, on 24 January, 2019

US marine biologist and author Rachel Carson (1907-1965) is renowned for starting the modern, global environment movement. She left a legacy of deeply insightful books that inspired a generation to think about nature in new holistic ways where everything is connected and where humans are utterly dependent on a healthy and resilient natural world.

Rachel lived at a time when it was extraordinarily difficult for women to have the right to an education, and even rarer to pursue a career in science. However, she succeeded against all odds and rose to the position of Editor-in-chief at the US Department of Fish and Wildlife Service.

She documented the widespread use of the chemical DDT that increased in toxicity the higher it went up the food chain, killing not only insects but also birds, wildlife, fish and ultimately damaging human health. The global community was shocked to learn that traces of DDT were found, as far away, in Antarctica in penguins and in Scandinavia in mothers' breast milk.

Soon after its publication, a raft of environmental legislation was passed, including the establishment of the US Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) that enacted laws for clean air, clean water and clean soil. Countries around the world, including Australia, followed with similar bans and introduced their own environmental protection legislation.

In Australia, Jack Munday, former secretary of the Builders Labourers Federation (BLF) had said that it was Rachel Carson's ground-breaking book *Silent Spring* (1962) that inspired him with an ecological understanding. This led to his union placing the world's first Green Ban on a precious patch of bushland in Hunters Hill on the Parramatta River and then went on to save so much of Sydney's heritage.

Rachel also influenced other giants of the environment movement such as David Suzuki and David Attenborough, who recently spoke to the World Economic Forum about the urgency to "care, respect and revere the natural world" – core Rachel Carson themes.

Yet it is her three books on the ocean that are often forgotten, and yet very



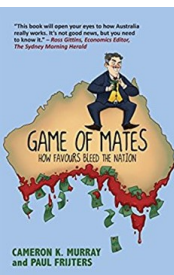
pertinent today as we face today's global environment crises. Her three books about the ocean - *Under the Sea-Wind* (1941), *The Sea Around Us* (1951) and *The Edge of the Sea* (1955) won national awards and brought her international fame and prominence as a writer.

Rachel understood that the health of the oceans was vital for life on Earth. Most of the planet is ocean – 71% in fact – a blue planet because of this ocean dominance. She understood how minute changes in temperature have cascading impacts on the breeding cycles of marine life that in turn impacted on the life cycles of other wildlife. She even noted the Arctic was warming, with a 'definite change in the arctic climate set in about 1900'.

**Rachel's message was that the oceans were fundamental to life on land.** This message is now coming to haunt us with more intense, frequent and dangerous storms and cyclones, sea level rises, ocean acidification, unsustainable industrial fishing, and deeply dangerous microplastics that are now being found in human tissue.

Today the world is facing a global ecological disaster when two of the greatest environmental crises are converging – climate change and biodiversity loss. We must not be paralysed into inaction.

Rachel was a woman determined to use her talents as a scientist and writer to share the wonders of nature, **believing that if we loved nature we would demand its protection.**



## Game of Mates, How Favours Bleed the Nation

By Cameron Murray & Paul Frijters, 2017.

This book is very relevant to NSW politics. The ingratiation and revolving doors between corporations, government bureaucrats and politicians is greased with the money from political donations. It explains how corporations and government elites are now one and the same. So corrosive has Australia's political life become that the authors make comparisons with the mafia, triads and yakuzacs. The chapter on the property industry reveal just how lucrative rezonings are for developers, with their super profits.

## FOKE Macquarie University Award

FOKE is pleased to announce that it will be funding a 2019 academic prize to be awarded to a final year Macquarie University student in recognition of academic excellence in Environmental Studies.

The Category 2 academic prize will be awarded to a final year student completing their undergraduate program in a Bachelor of Environment OR Bachelor of Environment with Bachelor of Laws.

**FOKE is keen to foster environmental awareness and conservation in the community by encouraging environmental education at all levels, including university studies.**



# Congratulations to 2018's Prize Winners

The Jean Posen Environment Award is given to a Lindfield Public School student who exhibits a passion for improving the environment. In 2018 the award went to Laura Loel.

The Jan Langley Sustainability Prize is awarded to East Lindfield student Fiona Davey. Fiona was a driver for sustainability in her school environment. The award was presented by Philip Langley.



Fiona Davey and her proud parents.

## ADVANCE NOTICE AGM

The FOKE AGM will be on  
**Wednesday 22 May 2018** at  
the Uniting Church Hall,  
Killara at 7.30 pm.

## Celebrating Heritage Festival 2019

**Joseph Maiden's *Eucalyptus Saligna* Walk—Turramurra**

Saturday 11 May, 2019 10-12noon

**Ku-ring-gai Chase National Park Walk**

Sunday 12 May, 2019 10-12noon

**Gordon's Camellias & Blue Gums**  
Saturday 18 May, 2019 10-12noon

**Celebrating 25 Years of FOKE**  
Sunday 19 May, 2019, Pecorino Café,  
Gordon 12.30 onwards

**For more details and to register go to FOKE website [www.foke.org.au](http://www.foke.org.au)**

# Berejiklian's Destructive Record on the Environment

With the NSW State election fast approaching, we cannot ignore that this Government has demonstrated such contempt for protecting the environment.

It was positive to hear that the Don Harwin, NSW Energy Minister acknowledge "The Federal Government is out of touch on energy and climate policy ..." Yet its own performance on climate change has been woeful, with many new coal mines approved in NSW over the past 4 years.

The NSW Government passed its Orwellian 'Biodiversity' laws that allow the destruction of habitat by greenlighting broadscale land clearing of native bushland. Nor can its flawed "offset money" for biodiversity management ever compensate for the loss of endangered habitat.

Regional Forest Agreements were renewed in 2018, signalling more intensive and destructive logging regimes of our State Forests which are pushing koalas and other arboreal mammals to extinction.

The Berejiklian Government has passed legislation (Water NSW Act) to raise the Warragamba Dam wall and flood 4,700 hectares of World Heritage national parks.

Major funding cuts to the National Parks and Wildlife Service have also occurred during the Coalition's time in office. This Government also revoked Marine Sanctuaries and then backflipped on its

plans for a Sydney Marine Park.

The **Nature Conservation Council** has prepared a report recommending 5 key points for 2019 election candidates in order to protect our nature and make climate our number-one priority. See [nature.org.au/nsw-election-2019](http://nature.org.au/nsw-election-2019).

1. Set up a \$2-billion regional renewable energy fund to accelerate the transition to clean energy;
2. Set up a \$1.5-billion land and biodiversity fund to restore bushland and forest to protect all high-conservation-value habitat from clearing;
3. Establish a Sydney Marine Park to give the marine life the world-class protections it deserves;
4. Create the Great Koala National Park to save our iconic species for future generations; and
5. End logging of public native forests to protect these remaining ecosystems, which are among the most diverse in the world.

**NSW needs leaders who recognise a healthy, functioning environment is essential for the health and wellbeing of its people.**



Koalas are listed as Vulnerable in many parts of NSW