

September 2008

Part of city's rich fabric is being irreparably torn SMH 25/08/08

Wendy Frew's article on the destruction of the North Shore ("Concrete raiders of a stately Eden", August 23-24) was timely and insightful. Something special is being lost here, not just to the residents of Ku-ring-gai but to all of Sydney.

We live in a small two-bedroom weatherboard worker's cottage built just after World War I, five minutes' walk from Gordon station. It's not "North Shore", just a modest dwelling with a big garden, in an old tree-filled valley reminiscent of a Sydney long ago lost in other areas.

Because it is close to the station, it is considered expendable in Sydney's attempt to mitigate urban sprawl. We are about to get apartment blocks of up to six storeys, running the length of our backyards, in about a third of our street. Please don't let envy and presumptions about people who live on the North Shore (I have never voted

Liberal, but will be sorely tempted next time) blind us to what is being lost.

This area is the equivalent of suburbs such as Balmain and Haberfield - a part of the rich fabric that makes Sydney such a beautiful city. Unfortunately, I fear, not for much longer.

DI Haskell Gordon

The empty tower looming over Jenny Lim's Lindfield garden is not only an assault on the senses. It epitomises the erosion of core values these developments bring.

While Mrs Lim complies with water restrictions by using a watering can, sprinklers whirr on the front lawns of this building. Every light in the building burns night and day - a security measure, I am told by the agent. Environmental vandalism is apparently preferable to hiring a security guard.

The towering red concrete slab jutting out at the entrance to this

building invites graffiti. The white walls radiate heat and glare. The building is so close to the rear boundary that adequate tree planting was impossible.

If the mayor objects to the crassness of such buildings, it is not evident in the council's development control policy.

Deborah Forbes Lindfield

In *The Great Australian Ugliness* (1960), Robin Boyd lamented the lack of respect for our "products of the architecture and landscaping arts of earlier days". He described the North Shore as one of "the really depressing parts of Sydney", with "some of the most dramatically beautiful country available to suburban commuters anywhere in the world", but which seemed "to draw out a delinquent streak" in nearly everyone who built there. "Buildings with charming ornamentation and craftsmanship" had been mutilated or demolished in

the name of progress, "leaving only a painful void where a national sense of history might be expected".

In 2008, the North Shore is once again depressing. Stately homes are again being demolished, replaced by towers of concrete with "no attempt to preserve any part of the fence, shrubs ... or trees of established gardens".

Boyd would certainly be shaking his head despondently.

Michiko de Solom Cremorne

Not-so-green development

Could Frank Sartor explain what happens to a street's carbon footprint when a bungalow with garden, mature trees and clothesline is replaced by 60 air-conditioned glass boxes and a token yucca?

Janette Harrison Killara

SMH 26/08/08

COMMUNITY FORUM

Over 250 people attended a Community Forum, *Planning, Sustainability and Democracy*, held at St Alban's Hall, Lindfield on 31st July. An overwhelming sentiment was of frustration in not being heard by Government and a perception of Government as not being "for the people". (see insert)

RECLASSIFICATION OF COMMUNITY LAND

The report into the reclassification of community land located in the St Ives, Turramurra, Gordon and Lindfield shopping centres was released in August. The report recommends reclassification of the 19 sites from community to operational, which means that the sites can be sold, something which cannot happen while the land is classified as community. The report also recommended consultation with user groups and regard for the concerns expressed in the many submissions (160 written and 27 oral) from residents opposed to the reclassification.

PLANNING PANEL

During August, a series of information sessions was held to keep the community informed of progress on key planning policies such as urban design, traffic, transport, vegetation, heritage and open space planning for each of the Town Centres. Each of the four sessions was attended by at least 300 residents, angry that the community wishes to keep the low-rise village character of the Town Centres appeared to have been disregarded in favour of hugely increased retail and housing development, with high-rise and underground parking. This is not what the residents of Ku-ring-gai want for their Town Centres.

TOWN CENTRES

See insert prepared by the Friends of Turramurra for an analysis of the what the NSW State Planning Department requires of Ku-ring-gai and what Ku-ring-gai Council has volunteered to accept. We do not need to provide so much development, and, in so doing, destroy the precious and unique character of Ku-ring-gai forever.

Now that you have heard about the plans for overdevelopment of your Town Centre and your residential area, there are several ways you can stay involved:

- Send an email to the Minister's Planning Panel at planningpanel@kmc.nsw.gov.au or write a letter to the Planning Panel at Locked Bag 1056 PYMBLE 2073
- Follow the Ku-ring-gai Council Website www.kmc.nsw.gov.au on Planning Panel issues
- Attend further consultation sessions and write submissions to the Planning Panel as the Town Centre plans are released (November/December 2008)
- Write to your representatives, your Ward Councillors and your State member.

Sincerely **FOKE Committee**

A Carroll 9498 1807, K. Cowley 9416 9007, J. Langley (Treasurer) R Maltby (Minutes Secretary), M. Galloway, J. Harwood, J. Johnston, J. Kitson, K. Pickles, J. Posen, D. Warner.

Dear FOKE Members

As the high, wide and out-of-context apartment blocks proliferate in Ku-ring-gai and cranes, rather than trees, dominate the skyline, this planning disaster that is the NSW Government's Metropolitan Strategy North has finally received significant publicity and in the wider community. Thank you to all who have tirelessly lobbied Ku-ring-gai Council and Councillors, State and Federal representatives, the State Planning Department and the media.

FROM THE MEDIA

STATELINE, ABC, *The Rape of Ku-ring-gai*



Quentin Dempster's Stateline programme on 15th August, *The Rape of Ku-ring-gai*, showed the heritage items and streetscapes being devastated by the new apartment blocks. Members of the FOKE committee were featured in this programme, as was the FOKE photographic record of the Ku-ring-gai that was before the impact of the NSW Government's Metropolitan Strategy North. The programme also featured the Chair of the Ku-ring-gai Planning Panel, Ms Elizabeth Crouch. The following programme on 22nd August featured the response of the State Planning Minister, Mr Frank Sartor, who summarised with "All we're

asking for is to meet their own target of 10,000, a modest target for Ku-ring-gai, a modest target around six town centre centres." Panel Chairwoman Elizabeth Crouch in response to a question to her from MP Jonathan O'Dea last week at the Lindfield Panel Information session about the discrepancies between the Metrostrategy targets and the gross over-planning that is now occurring in Ku-ring-gai, said "We [the Panel] are working towards that figure of 10,000 [units]. Yes". Why then has Ku-ring-gai council already planned for 150% over this target? Why is the Panel now looking to cram even more high-rise units, townhouses and villas into Ku-ring-gai Town Centres further destroying the amenity, character and environment of our suburbs and their villages? We are already well on the way to meeting the 30 year target of 10,300 unit dwellings which was set in 2004. Approximately 4000 units have been approved and are currently being built in Ku-ring-gai within the last 4 years. It must be said that enough is enough. See the two Stateline reports: <http://www.abc.net.au/stateline/nsw/content/2006/s2344329.htm> and <http://www.abc.net.au/stateline/nsw/content/2006/s2337306.htm>

The Sydney Morning Herald The concreting of Ku-ring-gai

On 2nd August, Michael Duffy wrote "The concreting of Ku-ring-gai proceeds. There are now 53 cranes working away on \$1.75 billion worth of new apartment blocks in the municipality. Three thousand flats are being built, with many more to come. It is destroying neighbourhoods that, according to the National Trust, ought to have been conserved as part of the state's architectural heritage. For years the local council opposed the assault, but this January Frank Sartor took away its most important planning powers and gave them to a planning panel appointed by himself. Now, along the railway in suburbs such as Killara and Lindfield, five-storey concrete boxes rise from the fertile soil. Refer to <http://www.blogs.smh.com.au/urbanjungle> re article 2 August SMH.

The Sydney Morning Herald Concrete raiders of a stately Eden (see pages 2-3)

On 23rd August, Wendy Frew wrote "ON THE quiet, leafy streets of Ku-ring-gai, on Sydney's upper North Shore, the houses are shaded by a canopy of native trees, the shopping centres have the air of a country village, and the whole area is enveloped in a well-heeled, conservative hush. This is the landscape that inspired the watercolours of Grace Cossington Smith and Ethel Turner's classic childhood book *Seven Little Australians*. But Ku-ring-gai's suburban nirvana is at risk, according to residents, who say both the State Labor Government and Ku-ring-gai Council have forsaken them for the developer's dollar. The Government's planning philosophy for all of Sydney - building high-rise apartments along railway lines to avoid urban sprawl - could not be more damaging for Ku-ring-gai, say residents, because that is where some of the best examples of heritage homes can be found."

Concrete raiders of a stately Eden

Residents of the rapidly growing district of Ku-ring-gai believe they have been forsaken for the developer's dollar, writes **Wendy Frew**.

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This is the landscape that inspired the watercolours of Grace Cossington Smith and Ethel Turner's classic childhood book *Seven Little Australians*.

But Ku-ring-gai's suburban nirvana is at risk, according to residents, who say both the State Labor Government and Ku-ring-gai Council have forsaken them for the developer's dollar.

The Government's planning philosophy for all of Sydney - building high-rise apartments along railway lines to avoid urban sprawl - could not be more damaging for Ku-ring-gai, say residents, because that is where some of the best examples of heritage homes can be found.

In the past four years, development applications for more than 3600 units worth more than \$2 billion have been approved for the area. That has gone a long way to meet the Government's Metropolitan Strategy requiring Ku-ring-gai to provide an extra 10,000 new dwellings by 2031.

The Planning Minister, Frank Sartor, says Ku-ring-gai must accept its share of Sydney's growth, but the Mayor of Ku-ring-gai, Nick Ebbeck, worries that nothing his council does will satiate the Government's desire to push more people and higher apartment blocks into this traditionally blue-ribbon territory.

Regardless of the merits of urban consolidation, the changes will rewrite the map of Ku-ring-gai. Block by block, rezonings are allowing polished concrete blocks to replace the stately homes of the 1920s, '30s and '40s.

Where the zonings have been changed, people are selling their homes to developers rather than live in a street that has lost its charm.

Those who have stayed, such as Jenny and Beng Lim, have found themselves squeezed between buildings that look more like office blocks than apartments.

When the Lims moved to their California bungalow in Burleigh Street, Lindfield, 12 years ago, there was no hint of what was to come. Back then, there were 10 bungalow homes in the street and little traffic. Today only two houses are left, a massive apartment block looms over their

backyard, and two more five-storey buildings are going up across the road.

Mrs Lim worries about the influx of residents and traffic the developments will bring.

"It is a hard decision to make but I believe we will stay put," she says. "We have put a lot of effort into the house. It is a home, not just a house."

The developers are destroying the very features that attract people to the area, according to the residents group Friends of Ku-ring-gai Environment.

"It is like they are chopping out great chunks of the character of these suburbs. There will be no heritage left worth protecting," says the group's vice-president, Kathy Cowley. "Liberal and Labor are exactly the same on this issue and that is why we have no allies in this battle."

Two years ago, the group became so concerned at the pace of development across Ku-ring-gai's nine suburbs that they began to photograph what was being lost. Half the 4000 photographs they took will be included in a book soon to be published that documents the area's inter-war heritage buildings, such as the Walter Burley Griffin house in Marion Street, Killara, and The Oaks, a large Federation house with turrets and detailed fretwork, on the Pacific Highway.

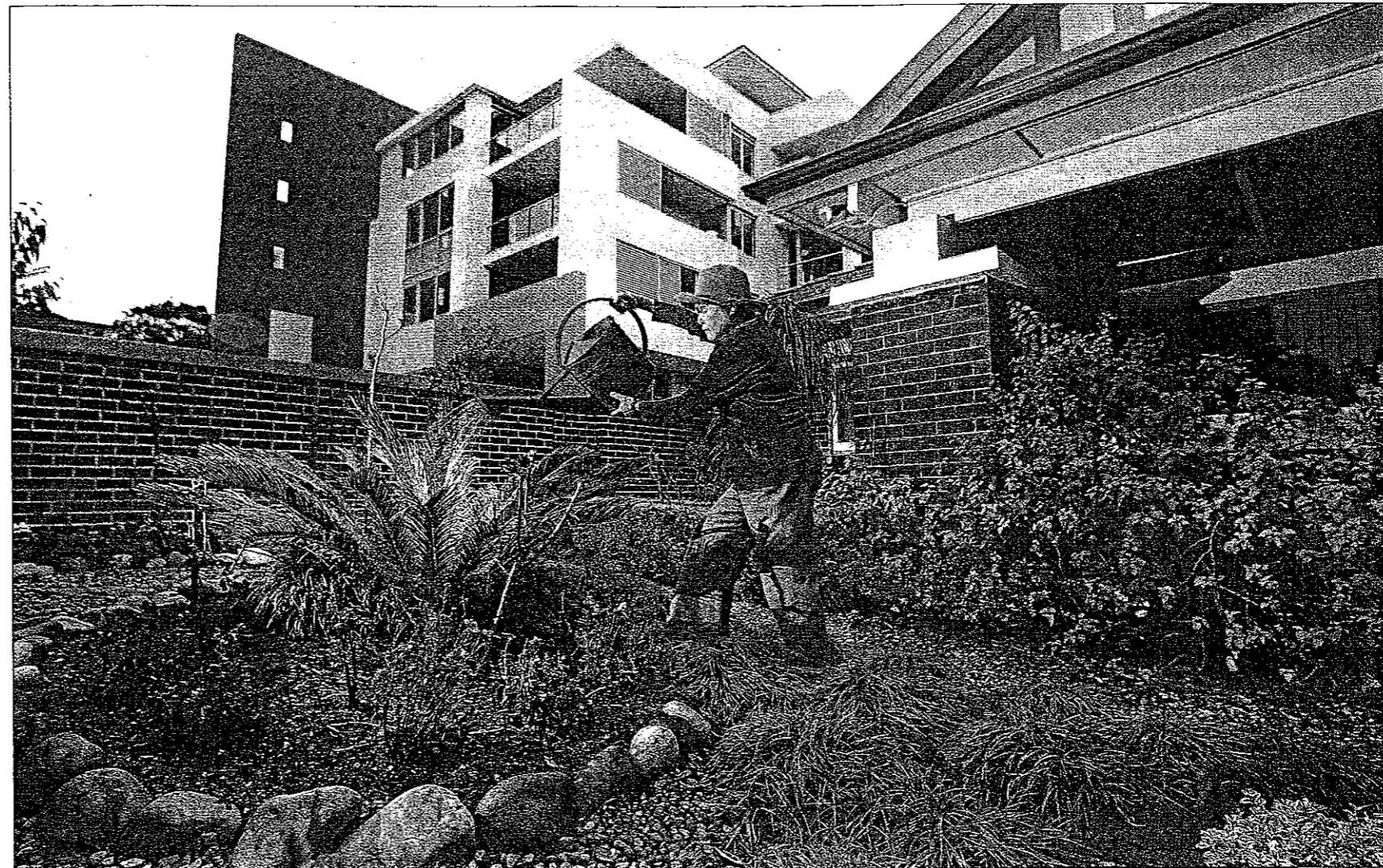
Mr Sartor denies the planning strategy will change the area's character. "I don't think they have been asked to do an unfair thing," he told the *Herald*, adding that any complaints about the design of the buildings should be made to Ku-ring-gai Council because it had approved most of the development applications.

"The local interests are legitimate but so is the issue of Sydney's carbon footprint."

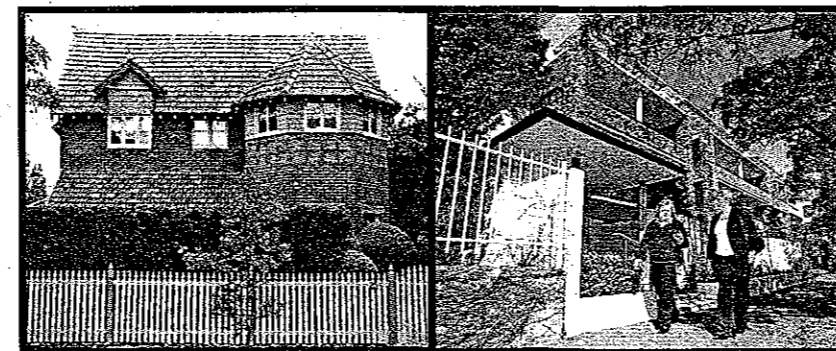
Cr Ebbeck, who with some other Ku-ring-gai councillors stood as an independent but is a member of the Liberal Party, says the rezonings will affect about 5 per cent of the community and dramatically change the character only of areas along the transport corridor. "The bad news is that it is where all our heritage is."

Cr Ebbeck says the council has tried to work with the Government on the planning changes, but it still waiting for the minister to approve special heritage zonings suggested by the council.

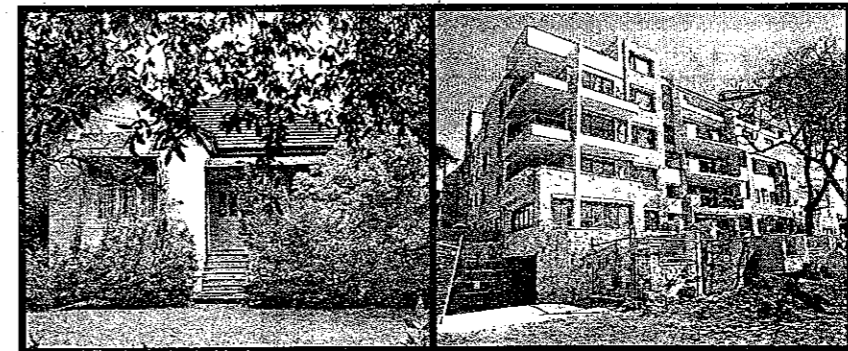
"I am not against development but I am against this crass way of doing it, this one-size-fits-all approach," he said.



Privacy destroyed ... Jenny Lim waters the front garden of her much-loved Lindfield home of 12 years, newly hemmed in by apartment blocks. Photos: Robert Pearce



Before and after ... apartments replaced the mansion at 25 Tryon Road, Lindfield.



March of progress ... a lush garden in Milray Street, Lindfield, became this huge block.

AND THIS IS NOT ALL!

SO FAR, ONLY A PART OF STAGE 1 HAS BEEN BUILT AND THE DEVESTATION OF KU-RING-GAI IS SHOCKING

IN STAGE 1 OF THE METROPOLITAN STRATEGY, SEVERAL THOUSAND HOMES WILL BE DEMOLISHED OR IMPACTED BY NEIGHBOURING MEDIUM-DENSITY DEVELOPMENT

STAGE 2 OF THE METROPOLITAN STRATEGY, WILL BRING EVEN MORE HOMES KNOCKED DOWN AND MANY MORE HOMES IMPACTED

WHY DO WE NEED ALL THIS DEVELOPMENT IN KU-RING-GAI?

Alan Parr of Friends of Turramurra, has provided this analysis of what the NSW State Planning Department requires of Ku-ring-gai and what Ku-ring-gai Council has volunteered to accept.

The State Government has a policy document called the “Metropolitan Strategy” that sets out how Sydney will manage population growth until the year 2031. The approach is to divide the city into sub-regions and allocate a dwelling and job target for each sub-region. Ku-ring-gai and Hornsby combined form the “North Sub-region” and it has a target of 21,000 dwellings. It was left to Hornsby and Ku-ring-gai Councils to decide how these dwellings would be divided between the two municipalities.

It is a recorded fact that the Department of Planning indicated to Ku-ring-gai Council that “a figure considerably less than half of the total for the sub-region being allocated to Ku-ring-gai would represent a satisfactory outcome”. This would represent about 8,000 dwellings.

Notwithstanding this, the majority faction on Ku-ring-gai Council used its numbers to force through a vote to voluntarily accept 10,000 dwellings. In other words, they deliberately took more development (some 2,000 dwellings) into Ku-ring-gai than the State Government required.

Council has zoned enough land to supply 10,300 dwellings under Stage 1 (Pacific Highway and parts of St Ives) and a further 4,500 dwellings under the Town Centres planning. Council argues that not all the land will be developed so the actual number of dwellings will be less – this is called “take-up”.

A recent report by SGS Economics and Planning call “Ku-ring-gai Development & Demographic Forecasts Reports” commissioned by Ku-ring-gai Council has studied this. It concludes that the planning for Stage 1 and the Town Centres will result in between 9,028 to 10,257 additional dwellings after “take-up” and economic viability issues are factored in. This does not include developments that occurred in 2004 and 2005 that contribute to meeting the target. That is, this planning alone basically meets the 10,000 dwellings that Ku-ring-gai Council volunteered to take under the Metropolitan Strategy.

However, the planning does not stop there. The Minister has used his “Part-3A” powers under the reforms to the planning act to take control of two sites in Ku-ring-gai – the UTS Lindfield site and the SAN hospital site in Wahroonga. These sites are planned to provide more than 1,000 additional dwellings.

In addition developments occurring elsewhere in Ku-ring-gai also count to meet the planning targets – development such as SEPP-5, SEPP-53, SEPP Seniors Living, Dual-Occupancy, sub-divisions, etc. In a letter to the Minister, and in the Land and Environment Court case regarding the Planning Panel, the Mayor and Council have estimated development in these areas to be 5,000 dwellings. Even if you assume that only half of this will be built it still equals 2,500 additional dwellings.

Further, the Planning Panel is now looking to add “Interface” sites into the Town Centre plans under the pretext of providing a buffer between standard residential houses and high-rise apartments. Council has estimated this to be at least 1,000 additional dwellings.

If one adds up the true level of development planned in Ku-ring-gai it is clear that we are looking at a minimum of 15,000 additional dwellings being built (not just planned but actually built) after taking into consideration factors such as “take-up” and economic viability. This is at least 5,000 (or 50%) more development than required.

The question must be asked, why did our Council volunteer to take 2,000 more dwellings than the Government really required? Why has our Council planned such massive expansion and development in our Town Centres when they know total planning far exceeds even their own voluntary target of 10,000? Why is the Planning Panel considering increasing the over-development even further by increasing building heights and adding in “interface sites? Why will no government department (either Council or the State Government) provide a detailed and accurate audit of the true dwellings planned in Ku-ring-gai? Why is the Liberal Party so silent on the issue?

From the COMMUNITY FORUM

Ku-ring-gai Take Action Campaign- Ku-ring-gai Needs You!

Now that you have heard about the overdevelopment plans for your Town Centre and residential area, there are several ways you can stay involved:

- Write an email to the Minister's Planning Panel at planningpanel@kmc.nsw.gov.au or write a letter to the Planning Panel at Locked Bag 1056 PYMBLE 2073
- Participate in our Ku-ring-gai Take Action email campaign:
<http://kuringgai.take-action.com.au/>
and get your family, friends and neighbours to send an email too!
- Follow planning issues and events through the new Ku-ring-gai Community Website
www.communityjury.com.au
- Follow the Ku-ring-gai Council Website www.kmc.nsw.gov.au on Planning Panel issues
- Attend further consultation sessions and write submissions to the Planning Panel as the Town Centre plans are released (November/December 2008)

For more information, contact concerned resident Kathy Cowley 9416 9007

BIODIVERSITY FORUM

On September 21st at the Turramurra Masonic Hall there will be a gathering of wonderful speakers, who have given their time to show that the loss of Biodiversity could be more urgent than Climate Change and that this is an issue beyond political division and beyond delay.

Three scientists, a politician and a famous urban environmentalist will speak on different aspects of a topic which is little understood, cross disciplinary and highly relevant to Ku-ring-gai.

Biodiversity is the variety of Life in the form of genes, species, populations and ecosystems found on Earth - on land, fresh water and in the oceans. Human actions have degraded the variety of these natural resources to the point where the planet is experiencing a sixth mass extinction event. Once gone there is no return. Politicians, bureaucrats and corporate decision makers need to listen since the irreversibility of biodiversity depletion and extinction are the most serious challenges facing society today and it's happening everywhere - even near you.

The three areas of Government putting development into Ku-ring-gai, Local and State Government and the Planning Panel, have a significant responsibility to future generations by including the use of a biodiversity and climate change perspective in a 50 year framework.

This is not happening in effect, because destruction occurs at the rezoning stage, and rezoning is preceding the careful enforcement of any biodiversity strategy. Since there is no gazette-able Biodiversity Strategy installed, Ku-ring-gai's function as a rare urban vegetation corridor between National Parks, will be completely disabled in a 50 year timeframe

Don't miss out on this invigorating, challenging, thought provoking Festival (see flier enclosed).

NATURE NEEDS YOUR SUPPORT!