

FOKE Talk

Assault on Our Suburbs

Though at first glance the Draft Design & Place State Environment Planning Policy incorporates all the 'well meaning' principles of good planning in its introduction, the detail in the objectives will lead to the destruction of the integrity of many suburbs, including Ku-ring-gai.

The principles espoused in this Draft Policy include delivering beauty and amenity through improved overall design, delivering inviting public spaces, improved sustainability and greener spaces for well-being and improved resilience to climate change.

However, the objectives in the Urban Design Guide highlight that the true purpose of this Policy is increased density across NSW, especially targeting current R2 low density residential areas.

Objective 3 aims to build 'Compact and diverse neighbourhoods'. Critically this is to be met by targeting density levels of 30 dwellings per hectare within a 5 minute walk to neighbourhood shops and centres. The minimum density of 15 dwellings per hectare is targeted everywhere else. In areas of greater intensity or where there are excellent active and public transport networks, development should aim for a minimum density of 30 dwellings per hectare across the entire walkable neighbourhood.

The reasoning that these minimum residential targets will guarantee a more vibrant urban area has absolutely no foundation.

Objective 3 effectively ignores current LEP's, environmental and heritage considerations and will impose a blanket density over the entire municipality that will extinguish any individual characteristics.

Objective 15 is the other concerning issue. Specifically this objective is to provide a mix and diversity of dwellings next to and within lots. This encourages apartment buildings in the same block as detached houses, or in neighbouring lots throughout the suburb.



This objective overrides the local Council zoning plans and will destroy the character of established suburbs and LGAs, such as Ku-ring-gai. High and medium density should not be allowed within R2 Low Density Residential areas. This is completely contradictory to Objective 16 which calls for the retention of existing built heritage, landscape and other unique features, including reinstatement of historical street patterns where possible.

Within Objective 15 is the damaging recommendation to override any current zoning and reduce detached dwellings to only 30% in areas where the number of dwellings per hectare is currently 15 dwellings or greater!

The use of the term 'compact neighbourhoods' as a preferred outcome litters the document as the desired planning outcome.

We believe this is another assault by the current State Government on the current character of existing suburbs and puts increased density as the key aim of this Policy. It is apparent that this policy is not about better design and improved sense of place, it is

about providing developers and the property industry with greater options for increasing density in our suburbs.

In terms of the Apartment Design Guide, there appear to be few mandated minimum standards, with developers able to freely depart from the recommended provisions with the use of offsets and alternative designs.

Another area lagging behind the rhetoric is the engagement with the community as a key stakeholder in any design plans during the full process, not just in the initial information gathering phase.

FOKE does not believe that this Policy will assist in building community trust in an already flawed planning system and has made a submission to this effect.

The submission period closed on 28th February. However, it would be worthwhile to contact your local MP to let them know you are concerned about the impact of this Policy unless significantly altered to address these concerns. You can find the documents at [Design and Place SEPP](#).

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Dear Members

We trust all is well and that you and your families have navigated recent times safely.

It has been a very intense and busy first couple of months for FOKE in responding to State Government planning policy changes and council policy matters, some of which we have notified you about in recent FOKE member emails. FOKE also sent a written submission to the Reclassification Public Hearing for the Gordon Bowling Club.

FOKE is very fortunate to have the support and wonderful help of committee members in researching the information and drafting our submitted responses. For instance the FOKE response to the Design and Place SEPP began with having to read and digest 600 pages of public exhibition documents and prepare and review the submission to Planning Minister Roberts.

We sent copies of two submissions, the Design and Place SEPP and the State Government's discussion paper for "A New Approach to Rezoning" to Ku-ring-gai's MPs. Jonathan O'Dea MP replied to the latter submission reporting that he has written to Minister Roberts stating:

"I agree with the essential sentiment of FOKE's submission and believe spot rezoning should only occur under exceptional circumstances and after appropriate public consultation. Would you please consider FOKE's concerns, which are highlighted in their submission." We are grateful for Mr O'Dea's interest and representation to the Planning Minister. We will let you know the reply.

Both policies if approved by the State Government would allow the potential for the entire extent of the Ku-ring-gai municipality to be exploited for high rise and medium density development across R2 single residential zones.

We are in the process of updating our website to a new server which will be easier to maintain and allow improved storage capacity. It will also be far more practical for our webmaster Ursula to manage. Importantly all our submissions will be available on the updated website. We are grateful for her expertise and all the work she has been doing.

We hope a number of members supported the Planning Proposal for the Killara Bowling Club and Killara Lawn Tennis Club to be heritage listed with a change to the zoning to Private Recreation (RE2) which closed 11 March. FOKE does not wish to see the Bowling Club bought by developers for unit development.

In December, we received the Government's response to the Standing Committee on Social Issues Report on the Review of the Heritage Act 1977. Minister Don Harwin's response supported all the recommendation of the Review except for ensuring State Significant Developments can only "override heritage concerns where the Heritage Council is satisfied that a clear net benefit for community will result". This was simply noted.

The Ku-ring-gai GeoRegion has now developed significant support from councils, National Parks and Government. We are currently working with the various bodies involved to ensure we have a number of trails across the region operational this year.

Following an active plan by residents supported by FOKE to retain the Roseville Chase Bowling Club site for the community, we have been disappointed that the new Council has moved to reclassify this land as operational. This is another community asset sold off by Council in an area not zoned for development.

Kind regards

Kathy Cowley
President

ADVANCE NOTICE FOKE AGM

The FOKE AGM will be on
Wednesday 25 May 2022
at the Uniting Church Hall,
Killara at 7.30 pm.

For the safety of our members there will be no Public Meeting this year due to Covid 19.

Only fully vaccinated members will be allowed to attend.

Masks will be mandatory.

We hope to return to a Public Forum with a range of interesting speakers from 2023.

Join FOKE Now!

www.foke.org.au

FRIENDS OF KU-RING-GAI ENVIRONMENT INC.

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Selling off Ku-ring-gai's community assets

Ku-ring-gai residents are losing highly valued urban green space, open space or community facilities for delivery of infrastructure projects, parks and civic spaces within close proximity to high density residential areas. Although this seems to make sense on paper, Council's priorities are focussed on immediate economic benefit but do not consider intergenerational, social and environmental values.

An example is the Roseville Chase Bowling Club which has closed. Not only is council proposing to sell the entire 10,000sqm site for redevelopment, it wants to rezone the site from R2 single residential dwelling to R3 for small lots up to 3 storey townhouses even though the site is not within a planned redevelopment area. Adjoining properties are detached houses and proposals to reserve some open space, as per previous council decisions, has been rejected.

Other Councils have repurposed their closed clubs to be parklands, playgrounds, recreation, community and activity areas. Why is our Council so determined to sell large parcels of land that cannot ever be replaced?

Council is the custodian and trustee of public assets. Local parks, reserves, bowling clubs and fields, golf clubs, community facilities such as council run childcare centres and libraries, halls and theatres are places that the community holds dear.

Until the early 2000's successive councils in Ku-ring-gai had protected council owned assets including car-parks by classifying the land "Community land". This meant that council could not sell the land or lease the land for more than 21 years.



In a dramatic shift in culture, around 2006 a swathe of previously protected council owned lands was reclassified by council resolution to 'Operational Land' enabling them to be sold.

Departments within council identified land that they deemed 'surplus' to community needs and these are progressively being sold to raise income to deliver community infrastructure projects or potentially reduce budget deficit. Other land sales are opportunistic such as the closing of bowling clubs. To date over 20 public assets have already been reclassified.

[Council's Acquisition and Divestment Policy, 2019](#) defines the criteria that must be considered prior to the acquisition or divestment of Council owned land and the processes and procedures required by legislation, including public consultation and notification.

Residents are losing the benefit of land that provide aesthetic, environmental or social values in their areas.

Is this mass sell-off sustainable? Are residents getting value for money? Is the extent of sell off reasonable given the continuing demands from the State Government for more dwellings and continuing pressure to deliver open space and facilities in the future?

Current policy prioritises the sale of public land rather than considering whether another option would achieve best value.

As an alternative, there have been calls for council to dispose of the property at 828 Pacific Highway Gordon purchased in 2012 for \$22.5 million. The acquisition was only made on the basis that it would be funded by the rationalisation of what council staff described as "under-utilised" council assets.

It's time to stop the sell-off and reconsider options for longer term benefit of residents including the sale of 828 Pacific Highway.

Government's rezonings overreach

The proposed changes to the rezoning process appear to have the strong objective of fast tracking development, weakening input from elected councils and their communities and introducing yet another SEPP to override Local Environment Plans (LEPs).

State Government under the guise of 'streamlining', 'flexibility', 'simplifying' or 'removing red tape' is facilitating the development industry to by-pass councils and local communities to amend LEPs.

There are numerous areas where our communities and character will be destroyed with this proposed approach, especially with the introduction of a 'rezoning authority' as another level of intervention by government. This removes even more authority from an elected council and local communities who need to consider rezoning in the context of the area's strategic plans.

Under the proposed plans developers can bypass council and any LEP and request a spot rezoning via a proponent led proposal.

Incredibly, environmental impacts are ignored as there is no longer a mandatory process for full environmental assessments for new LEPs.

The proposals for rezoning reforms are clearly not intended to be in the public interest as they will effectively further reduce democratic input into the planning system. The reforms erode the autonomy and control of Councils in the rezoning process and decision making, reduce community consultation and, in essence, override strategic planning for the benefit of development and the property industry.

These proposals will do nothing to improve community trust in the planning system.

Perrottet's population surge!

Premier Perrottet in October 2021 stated in the media that he wants a surge of 2 million migrants' into NSW. This comes after a tumultuous period for NSW residents from lockdowns and deprivations due to Covid 19.

The state government supported by economists is pushing this population agenda as the basis for economic growth for the state. But this is a flawed approach when we have major infrastructure issues across Sydney, lack of effective transportation targeting new suburbs, insufficient and overcrowded schools, under-employed working residents, high rents and unachievable house prices. A massive increase in immigrants is not going to fix these issues. It will just exacerbate them!

Even the former Premier Gladys Berejiklian realised this in 2018 when she called for a halving of the immigration rate to the state to allow time to meet existing infrastructure demands. She stated at that time that NSW "needed a breather" because "successive federal governments have allowed the rate of immigration to NSW to balloon out of control."

Since Perrottet's immigration call there has been no discussion as to the impacts of climate change, the protection of the environment and biodiversity or to the impacts to the way of life as we currently know it. Critical infrastructure will continue to lag further behind requirements with such a surge in population!

In Ku-ring-gai we have already witnessed the impacts of a 25% increase in population from 2004 to 2021. We have seen how development has negatively impacted Ku-ring-gai's heritage and unique environment.

Rather than look at the economic growth or Gross Domestic Product (GDP) for NSW, any effective government should be addressing

our declining GDP per capita in order to improve the standard of living for all.

With 2 million more immigrants as its target, the State Government is increasing the rhetoric on the need for more high and medium density across all suburbs, and amending planning instruments to assist developers to achieve this.

Ku-ring-gai is being tasked with a further 3500 to 4000 new dwellings over the next few years. This will mean a cumulative 41%-50% population increase for our area in the form of high density and medium density. This is both destructive and completely unsustainable!

FOKE was recently asked to contribute to an article on Sydney's population growth by Catherine Hanrahan of the ABC. Here is the link to the article - ['Sydney's population is predicted to explode — this is where people will live in 20 years'](#) which was published on 10 February.

Jan Langley Sustainability Award

Jan Langley, a former parent at Lindfield East Public School made a significant contribution



Charles W. Bean Oval Lindfield

As mentioned in our December 2021 FOKE TALK, the naming of the UTS Lindfield Oval as the Charles W. Bean Oval is now complete with the recent installation of a commemorative plaque.



to the school and also was a member of FOKE.

This award is being presented to Ivy Huang who has been instrumental in the success of the Eco garden. As part of a team she has cared for chickens, guinea pigs, and native birds.

Ivy has also been involved with ensuring recycling bins are emptied and watering the school's vegetable garden and fruit trees, and in selling the Eco garden's produce after school.

Ivy has undertaken these tasks in a happy and co-operative way, completing tasks above and beyond what was required, and was always willing to help others.

**Congratulations
Ivy Huang**