

# FOKE Talk

## The Housing Affordability Crisis

Australia is experiencing record population growth as Federal Labor accelerates high immigration levels.

Australia's [net overseas migration level](#), which represents the difference between incoming migrants and outgoing migrants over a 12-month period, is expected to be 400,000 in 2022-23 and 315,000 in 2023-24. Pre-pandemic migrant intake gain was around 235,000 per year.

The connection between population growth – driven by high immigration – and high housing inflation is known to almost everyone in the property industry but ignored or denied in political circles.

Despite population growth driving housing distress, Australians are told they must accept higher densities in their community for the 'greater good'.

Sustainable Population Australia's (SPA) [briefing note](#) argues that Australia's housing crisis cannot be solved unless there is a slowing of population growth.

SPA's [report](#) finds record population growth is creating a perfect housing storm, worsened by negative gearing, capital gains tax discount, first home buyer grants and underinvestment in social housing.

There are real fears that the housing crisis risks a dystopian future of homelessness and rent stress for the nation.

The neoliberal framing of housing as a financial asset rather than a public necessity has shattered Australia's social contract which promised dignity and security for all.



Growth demand, rather than supply constraints is what is pushing up housing prices. Sydney's house prices continue to rise from 6%-9% and units by between 2% -5%. The median price of a house is expected to be \$1.62 million to \$1.66 million. Housing affordability is driving widening inequalities of wealth and breaking down social cohesion.

SPA's report calls for a sustainable population policy combined with tax reform, regulation, investment in public housing to address the housing crisis.

Rapid population feeds speculation and drives both densification and urban sprawl. Buyers also get less amenity for their money than they used to.

Homes in older suburbs increasingly become desirable by comparison and command higher prices as a result. Rezoning to allow medium and high-density developments in

older suburbs further pushes up land prices, providing developers and existing home owners with huge windfalls, while new households are forced to downsize or commute further.

Rental increases and availability are impacted by AirBnb and investors leaving properties unoccupied.

Housing construction has not been constrained by supply of land or zoning approvals. Property economist Dr Cameron Murray explains, - it suits property developers to claim that planning constraints and red tape cause housing shortages but they typically hold years' worth of approved subdivisions and slow down their development whenever prices falter, to keep the market tight and hot.

Likewise, it pays for property developers to invest heavily in lobbying for high immigration.

## PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Dear Members

After 12 years NSW now has a new Labor Government that was elected on 25 March, 2023—albeit as a minority government. For legislation to be passed Labor will need the support of two out of the nine independent or minor party MPs.

FOKE congratulates Matt Cross as the new member for Davidson and Alister Henskens for his re-election as the member for Wahroonga.

More housing “supply” is being championed as the solution to addressing the housing crisis with proposals for additional development on the North Shore. There is real concern that Ku-ring-gai will again be targeted for more unwanted unaffordable high rise development in and around rail stations and St Ives.

We understand pressure is building on Ku-ring-gai Council for the real possibility of expanding high density zones within Ku-ring-gai. It appears the new NSW government, remains captured by the property and development industry in promoting their ponzi schemes that entrench unaffordable housing across the state.

We need to remind Premier Chris Minns and Housing Minister Paul Scully that we live in a democracy, with local governments elected to represent the interests of their local community not property interests and developers. Overriding communities is not only undemocratic but creates perceptions of corruption. Isn't it time that Minns and Scully challenged federal ALP's irresponsibly high immigration numbers?

Recently Janine Kitson and I met with MP Matt Cross in his Lindfield office, along with a resident of the Lourdes Retirement Village. He listened to our grave concerns about the bushfire risks associated with the Levande planning proposal. If approved,

this proposal will double the population of residents living at the village, significantly increase the density and height of the village and build 63 new medium density dwellings on the bushfire flame zone. Following our meeting Matt drafted questions to be tabled in Parliament and to relevant Ministers. We thank Matt for meeting with FOKE and for listening and responding to our concerns.

Meanwhile FOKE has lodged a GIPA (Freedom of Information) Application to find out why the Rural Fire Service of NSW supported the Lourdes Retirement Village planning proposal. We are seeking correspondence between the RFS, the proponent Levande and its consultants BlackAsh. The Department of Planning is currently assessing the proposal before the Sydney North Planning Panel that makes the determination. FOKE congratulates Ku-ring-gai Council for its submission that strongly argues that it would be negligent to approve such a flawed bushfire risk proposal.

FOKE has also written to NSW Fire Commissioner asking questions about the bushfire risks associated with the Levande proposal.

The Ku-ring-gai GeoRegion project's Steering Committee is pursuing a new, innovative 'crowdfunding' proposal with Bendigo Bank as a way to raise funds to establish trails in the proposed Geopark. We look forward to hearing from the Bendigo Bank if our submission has been successful.

The Natural Turf Alliance (NTA), of which FOKE is a member, held a successful public forum on 23 June to a packed audience (see the report page 3).

Kind regards  
Kathy  
PRESIDENT



### Decades of Planning Failure — Affordable Housing

Regrettably NSW Labor MPs are lining up to attack Ku-ring-gai residents for fighting to protect the environmental and heritage values of Ku-ring-gai. Over the years both sides of government have promised housing choice—including [affordable housing](#)—to justify higher densities. Yet this has never been delivered. Why would Ku-ring-gai residents trust the NSW Government now? Why would Ku-ring-gai residents stop fighting for Ku-ring-gai as a place of national environmental significance when we are facing a biodiversity extinction and climate crisis?

MP Rose Jackson, the NSW Minister for Housing, recently was quoted in the article [‘Get out of the way’: Rose Jackson’s social housing warning for ‘anti-development’ Sydney suburbs](#).

Sydney is being destroyed by governments who for decades have promised affordable housing but then never deliver it.

### Join FOKE Now!

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

Please tell your friends & neighbours to join too

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

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## Local Updates

### Hillview, Turramurra

The Northern Sydney Home Nursing Service has vacated this community health centre. The failure to maintain Hillview's collection of heritage buildings, that are locally heritage listed, and to have allowed them to become run down is appalling. The new Minister for Health, Mr Ryan Parker has indicated that he is considering the future use of this site, including alternative uses to deliver "health-related services". Let's hope this is not code for more high rise .

### Ku-ring-gai Town Hall and Presbytery, Pymble

Ku-ring-gai Council has announced it is reallocating \$485,900 from its Capital Works program to refurbish this State Heritage listed Council property. This now brings into question whether Council is going to proceed with its reclassification & sale.

### Secret Park, Pymble

Council is proposing to reclassify and sell off this community land near the Ku-ring-gai Town Hall and Presbytery. A resident group has formed to fight to retain this park.

### Marian St Theatre, Killara

Ku-ring-gai Council continues to explore feasibility options for the Marian Street Theatre. Yet with escalating costs there are fears that the only way Council can pay for a new theatre is to increase rates or sell Marian Street Theatre off.

### Lindfield Hub Project

Council is updating the Arboricultural Report and the Flora & Fauna Assessment. Sydney Turpentine Ironbark Forest (STIF) a critically endangered ecological community on this site and is keen to replant STIF on the new development on the site.

## Ku-ring-gai DCP Housekeeping Review

Ku-ring-gai Council is currently seeking comment from the community on the Ku-ring-gai Development Control Plan (DCP) housekeeping review for the deadline of 9 August, 2023 . A number of amendments are being proposed to strengthen the DCP. It will be important for as many submissions as possible. FOKE will send members some points to put in submissions.



FOKE's 2023 Heritage Festival Walks, highlighting the Ku-ring-gai GeoRegion, was an outstanding success. Fully booked. Fully in awe of just how rich Ku-ring-gai's geological, environmental and cultural heritage is.

Over four weekends in mid 2023 Dr John Martyn, Angus M. Robinson and Dr Peter Mitchell OAM shared their knowledge, expertise and commitment to FOKE's Ku-ring-gai GeoRegion project. They led tours explaining why Geotrails are important for West Pymble's Bicentennial Park, Wahroonga's Browns Field and Turramurra's Sheldon Forest. Thanks too, to Dr Chloe Mason, from the Australian Association of Bush Regenerators (AABR) for her promotion of these walks that brought community and bush regenerators together.

FOKE's GeoRegion project recognises the geological, biological and cultural forces that have shaped the northern Sydney's landscape with its unique and rare flora and fauna. Read more about it on the [FOKE website](#).

## 50th Anniversary of World Environment Day

When World Environment Day was first celebrated in 1973 it promised a new era of environmental protection for the planet. Yet the environment continues to collapse due to overpopulation and ineffective environmental protections. Since 1973 global population has doubled from four billion to eight billion and Australia's population has doubled from 13.4 million to 26.4 million. Population and consumption growth continues to accelerate our climate and biodiversity extinction crisis.

Ku-ring-gai is a place of high biodiversity. [Ku-ring-gai Council's State of Environment Report 2017-2021](#) outlines this with Ku-ring-gai's three national parks, 119 bushland reserves, nationally significant remnant Blue Gum High Forest and Sydney Turpentine Ironbark Forest, over 800 recorded native plant species (including 18 threatened species) and over 690 species of native animals (including more than 10 threatened species). Yet despite the evidence of this extraordinarily high biodiversity Ku-ring-gai's biodiversity continues to decline from the impacts of population growth, urban density and the accelerating global climate and biodiversity crisis.

Fifty years have passed since the first World Environment Day. We now know so much more about ecosystems— they are highly complex, connected, extraordinarily fragile and vulnerable to extinction. We also know that when one part of the environment is damaged it impacts elsewhere. So when Ku-ring-gai's environment is damaged so too are other parts of Sydney's environment.

## Fighting FOR Natural Turf



Community 'town hall' meeting at Ku-ring-gai Town Hall 23 June 2023 where over 120 residents listened to 10 expert speakers.

A community 'town hall' and online meeting resoundingly challenged the legitimacy of a Ku-ring-gai Council decision to approve a synthetic playing field on the Norman Griffiths Oval, Bicentennial Park, West Pymble on 23 June, 2023.

Over 100 residents filled the Ku-ring-gai Town Hall to listen to experts [advocating for a 'non-plastic' future for community ovals](#) because of the health and environmental dangers that synthetic turf pose.

**The [Natural Turf Alliance](#) is now supporting a challenge over the legality of Ku-ring-gai Council's decision to install synthetic fields on the Norman Griffiths Oval, Bicentennial Park.** This oval is surrounded by critically endangered Sydney Turpentine Ironbark Forest and is sited above Quarry Creek flowing into Lane Cove National Park.

However, just as the Land & Environment Court was about to set a hearing date, Ku-ring-gai Council surprised everyone by reissuing an [updated Review of Environmental Factors](#) (REF) that the community have been asking for since April 2023. Yet another example of questionable governance and due process? Why must the community take court action, costing thousands of dollars raised by hundreds of concerned ratepayers, to force Ku-ring-gai Council to start listening to residents?

**The Land and Environment Court will hear the case of Natural Grass at Norman Griffiths Inc (NGANG) Versus Ku-ring-gai Council on 2nd, 3rd & 4th August, 2023.** The hearing will occur around a month before the synthetic surface is scheduled to be installed at Norman Griffiths Oval. If the Land & Environment finds in favour of the Natural Turf Alliance, it will be a landmark case, not just for Ku-ring-gai, but for residents across NSW who want to keep their safe, green natural turf.

## Fighting FOR Bushfire Safety



Community meeting at North Turramurra Bowling Club, June 2023

The Royal Commission into National Natural Disasters recommended governments "be required to consider present and future natural disaster risk when making land-use planning decisions for new developments". Yet two developments in Ku-ring-gai, both located in areas mapped high bushfire prone, raise questions as to the efficacy of the current bushfire risk assessments and the decisions taken to deliver development against the risks to human life and property.

**The North Turramurra Action Group (NTAG)**, supported by hundreds of local residents, vocally opposed the development application for a 300-spectator football grandstand facility to allow A league matches and offices at the North Turramurra Recreation Area (NTRA) on Bobbin Head Road citing bushfire risk as a major objection. With hundreds of residents from aged care facilities, a hospital and school to evacuate in case of a bushfire it was surprising that this development application was approved by Council.

**In Killara, Lourdes Retirement Village** is also located in high bushfire prone bushland. A proposal is currently under assessment to spot-rezone the site for a seven storey "vertical" retirement village along 63 two and three storey townhouses to be built in the *flame zone* adjacent the bush. There are questions as to whether the Rural Fire Services (RFS) has done due diligence in its assessment.

Ku-ring-gai Council is stringently opposed to the development. We are yet to see if the Department of Planning and its Sydney North Planning Panel approves Lourdes rezoning proposal. If approved this will set a negligent precedent for Ku-ring-gai and all of NSW.

**With big fires predicted for 2023-2024 are the planning authorities prepared to risk lives lost from deadly fires?**