

# FOKE Talk

## Government Demands More Housing

Premier Chris Minn's Bradfield Oration on 16 November 2023 along with the letter sent by the Minister for Planning Paul Scully dated 30 October 2023 to the Mayor of Ku-ring-gai, signalled the State Government's intentions to significantly boost housing supply in Ku-ring-gai and all metropolitan councils. The letter reinforced the Premier's seriousness about delivering on NSW's target of 376,000 homes in 5 years under the National Housing Accord.

Minister Scully's letter to the Mayor stated:

"We are asking councils to review their local policy settings and approached in the interests of housing supply. I ask you to identify existing well-located areas where terraces, small unit blocks or well designed mid-rise apartment can be permitted. With this in mind, the Department will be realigning its resources to support councils in these initiatives and is developing a tool kit to help councils and state agencies deliver these outcomes we need. Council's shouldn't wait for this work to happen, rather I am asking you to begin the work identifying locations and permitting more low and mid-rise homes."

FOKE has no doubt the Minister will be monitoring councils' investigations and work with them very closely. Ku-ring-gai's Mayor is awaiting further feedback and recommendations from staff on the implications of the Minister's letter and following that feedback the mayor proposes to



write to the Planning Minister to outline Council's concerns on the feasibility of what is proposed.

The Premier's Bradfield Oration included these proposals in driving housing supply:

1. That planners and assessors must consider the importance of new housing particularly for young families and newly arrived migrants.
2. The Government commitment to publish a league table comparing the planning performance of each council and Department of Planning with the performance of other states.
3. The Government will publish housing approval times, or delay for every State Significant Development.
4. The government will publish plans for new housing zones which will allow for greater height and more housing.

5. Not all new housing will be high rise or new housing estates.

6. There will be "missing middle" housing development in the middle ring suburbs to meet housing targets.

7. The Government will develop several template building designs for terraces and low rise apartment blocks.

8. Development built to the "pattern book" will be considered complying development.

9. The Government has launched an International design competition to design Sydney's new terraces and apartment blocks. Winning designs will be part of the "pattern book".

10. The Government intends to slash approval times and costs to get results for the people of this State.

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## PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Dear Members,

FOKE has experienced a very busy end of year with several submissions on various planning issues such as Planning Inquiry into the Effect of Climate Change the Environment and Communities, the Planning Proposal for Lizard Rock, and a letter to the Minister for Emergency Services the Hon Jihad Dib on the Lourdes Planning Proposal.

The Levande planning proposal for Lourdes Retirement Village seeks to amend the Ku-ring-gai LEP to rezone the land to R3 medium density, increase permissible building heights by 130% (from 9.5m to 22m - a height more typical of R4 high density housing) and increase the floor space ratio (FSR) by 150%. These changes are designed to allow a **doubling of the site's resident population**. In addition to rebuilding the current retirement village in vertical form (in buildings up to 7 storeys tall), the latest iteration of the proposal includes 63 non-seniors townhouses on the site's southern perimeter, adjacent to steeply sloping bushland and within the flame zone. This has reduced the amount of seniors' housing in the proposed redevelopment and created additional risks for all residents, and emergency personnel.

An article on Lourdes proposal was featured in the Sun Herald, page 22 on Sunday 19 November. Ku-ring-gai Council has been highly critical of the Levande's proposal "as the plans do not provide adequate separation from adjacent fire risk bushland to enable a defensible space for buildings and fire fighters".

In what was anticipated due to all the recent publicity over the housing crisis, Council received a letter from Minister for Planning the Hon Paul Scully late October. Please refer to the FOKE article in the newsletter.

FOKE has written to councillors supporting the Mayoral Minute in response to the Minister's demands which appear quite ambitious and unrealistic with the term of this council ending and council elections expected next year.

FOKE's greatest concern is that changing the zonings to allow for townhouses in R2 single residential zones and for higher densities in R3 zones, would substantially alter the heritage character and environment of Ku-ring-gai which we have been arguing for over 25 years to protect.

We were pleased that the late Dr Tony Rescei, President of Save Our Suburbs and member of FOKE was remembered in a fitting tribute in a Mayoral Minute at the October meeting of Council.

FOKE has written to former General Manager of Ku-ring-gai Council John McKee to thank him for his 26 years of professional service to Ku-ring-gai, wishing him well for his future endeavours.

Due to the closure of the Killara Post Office FOKE has had to locate its postal address to PO Box 584 Gordon 2072.

We wish you all a very happy Christmas and a healthy and joyous New Year.

Kind regards

Kathy Cowley  
PRESIDENT

*Our very best  
wishes  
to you and  
your family  
for a  
Merry Christmas  
And a  
Happy New Year!*



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

*Established 1994*

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11. With the climate crisis and more extreme weather the Government will be encouraging households and businesses to take out insurance. The Government will remove the Emergency Service Levy from insurance and apply it instead to property in the state.

12. Design competitions for high rise buildings will no longer be necessary provided the developer selects an architect from a pre-approved list.

## NSW Planning Inquiry

The NSW Upper House recently held an inquiry into the NSW planning system and the impacts of climate change on the environment & communities.

FOKE responded outlining how, for over thirty years, it has called on successive NSW Governments to implement ecologically sustainable planning policies and recognize the limitations of urban housing growth.

The scale of the environment crisis has dramatically increased since FOKE was first founded in 1994. The scale, frequency and intensity of climate disasters is dramatically increasing with more extreme bushfires, flooding, storms, heat waves across NSW.

FOKE outlined how the cumulative impacts of “densifications” has degraded and destroyed much of Ku-ring-gai’s natural, built and cultural heritage.

FOKE’s full submission can be read at [www.foke.org.au](http://www.foke.org.au)

## Ku-ring-gai Developer Found Guilty



## Ku-ring-gai GeoRegion Browns Forest Sign



Dr John Martyn, a member of FOKE’s Ku-ring-gai GeoRegion Steering Committee, at Browns Field, Wahroonga.

Progress continues on FOKE’s project ‘[Ku-ring-gai GeoRegion](#)’ (KGR) that embraces the geological wonders of Ku-ring-gai Chase National Park and other northern Sydney bushland areas.

In late 2023 FOKE was awarded a grant to install its first geotrail sign at Browns Field, Wahroonga. The sign explains Fox Valley’s rich geology history that includes a diatreme.

A diatreme is a volcanic crater/plug formed by explosive eruptions which have then been eroded. Sites show highly weathered outcrops of fine to medium grained, quartz-poor fragmental volcanic rocks interlayered with much finer grained bedded rocks of possible crater-lake

sediments.

Many rainforest plants unusual to the Sydney area are also associated with the Browns field site.

Explanations of this geological setting has been captured within the newly designed and installed signage (pictured) funded by Ku-ring-gai Council and managed by KGR Steering Committee member, Dr John Martyn.

Importantly, these sites and trails are both interesting and educational. The Browns Field diatreme is the first and worth a visit to explore and learn what we have in our backyard!

Other proposed geotrails and geosites across the GeoRegion continue to be finalized.

Ralan developed over twenty apartment buildings in Ku-ring-gai over the past 15-20 years.

However, the managing director of Ralan Property Group has recently pleaded guilty to six fraud-related offences.

In 2019 after 20 years in business, the Ralan Group collapsed. This leaves behind a \$2-billion pipeline of more than 3000 residential units with hundreds of off-the-plan buyers.

Founder William O’Dwyer is also subject of an investigation by the Australian Securities and Investments Commission (ASIC) relating to “unsecured borrowing arrangements”.

The current charges relate to loans advanced to group companies that were involved in constructing apartments across Sydney including those in Turramurra and Gordon.



## Residents risk losing access to public land



Cr Cedric Spencer, Wahroonga Ward with Matt Cross MP for Davidson at NTAG AGM on 19 November, 2023

North Turramurra Action Group (NTAG) has written to the NSW Office of Sport asking that the \$3.64 million sports grant awarded to the Northern Suburbs Football Association (NSFA) be rescinded.

Why? Because it is believed to be non-compliant; that it does not have the Landowner's Consent; nor does it meet multi sports facility requirements.

NSFA is being granted exclusive rights over Ku-ring-gai's public recreational land. This 'deal' will deprive Turramurra locals and other Ku-ring-gai residents access to North Turramurra Recreation Area.

Ku-ring-gai residents have paid for this parkland redevelopment of the former tip site, through a special six year levy.

The grant will contribute to building an the 80m x 10m grandstand that will gate off the community from walking there.

If the NSFA project incurs construction cost blow outs Ku-ring-gai taxpayers could be liable for millions of dollars.

Alister Henskens SC MP for Wahroonga was the Minister for Sport when the NSFA initiated their grant application.

## Residents still oppose plastic turf at W. Pymble



Norman Griffiths Oval, next to Bicentennial Park being bulldozed for synthetic turf

Despite community opposition to the installation of synthetic turf at Norman Griffiths Oval this plastic development continues. In mid 2023 residents took Ku-ring-gai Council to the Land & Environment Court opposing the synthetic turf on environmental grounds but lost the case.

Despite this setback Friends of Norman Griffiths Oval continue to express their many concerns about this proposal. One issue relates to why are sports grants enabling synthetic turf development to the Northern Suburbs Football Association (NSFA)?

Residents fear that the plastic micro plastics released from the synthetic oval will pollute the creeks flowing into the Lane Cove National Park.

The Norman Griffiths Oval is also adjacent to endangered Sydney Turpentine Ironbark Forest at Bicentennial Park, West Pymble.

However Member for Ku-ring-gai, Alister Henskens SC MP acknowledged that the \$150,000 sports grant that has contributed towards the cost of the installation of a synthetic playing field at Norman Griffiths Oval in West Pymble is something to be applauded.

## Patyegarang/ Lizard Rock at Belrose



View looking over Belrose site that is earmarked to be bulldozed for housing

FOKE sent in a submission opposing the rezoning of 71ha of busland at Patyegarang, Morgan Road, Belrose, also known as 'Lizard Rock'.

If the 450 residential dwellings at Morgan Road, Belrose/ Oxford Falls are approved it will have a detrimental and irreversible environmental impact on the Northern Beaches' biodiversity, climate, bushfire safety, strategic planning as well as setting a dangerous precedent for other bushland sites, some of which will impact on Ku-ring-gai's bushland.

FOKE opposes the rezoning proposal because it is in a high bushfire area and because of the devastating impacts it will have on biodiversity. FOKE argued in its submission that if the NSW Government is committed to implementing the recommendations of the ['Bushfire Royal Commission'](#) it must reject this rezoning proposal.

If the Patyegarang Planning Proposal is approved it sets a precedent for further rezonings of [Northern Beaches Aboriginal Land](#) that includes the 135-hectare bushland site at Ralston Avenue in Belrose adjoining the Garigal National Park and the Ku-ring-gai bushland suburbs of St Ives, East Killara and East Lindfield.



FOKE wishes to pay tribute to Tony Recsei (1938-2023) in advocating to save Sydney suburbs from forced high rise rezonings. Tony articulated why NSW governments' urban consolidation policies are public policy failures.



FOKE congratulates Ku-ring-gai ecological pioneer Janet Fairlie-Cunninghame on her 90th Birthday and thanks her for her seminal work in bush regeneration that has invaluable restored so many areas of Ku-ring-gai's bushland.



FOKE thanks John McKee, former Ku-ring-gai Council General Manager (2006-2023) for his leadership in protecting much of Ku-ring-gai's natural, built and cultural heritage from overdevelopment, forced amalgamation and higher density rezonings.