

# FOKE Talk

## More Diligence Needed on Ku-ring-gai's Character

Council is seeking input into the development of Ku-ring-gai's Local Character in order to manage development 'in a way that conserves and enhances Ku-ring-gai's unique visual and landscape character'. This is an absolutely essential and important exercise and we fear that Council is just rushing this through its Local Strategic Planning Statement priorities, without the rigour that is required to effectively understand and allow the protections our area deserves.

In 2000, when the last Character Study was undertaken as one of the baseline studies to form the basis of the Residential Strategy for Ku-ring-gai, Council commissioned Heritage consultants (Gordon, Mackay, Logan) and Urban Planners (Keys, Young) to prepare a Heritage and Neighbourhood Character study. This comprised a rigorous assessment of the character of each suburb with a set of noteworthy, and still relevant, recommendations as to the retention of the area's character and visual appeal as development occurred. A 1999 street by street analysis conducted by MA Schell consultants supported this Study.

The current Local Character Study will include workshops as well as the online survey and interactive mapping to gauge the community views as to what constitutes the character of Ku-ring-gai and our



suburbs, but no substantial study has been included, nor are heritage consultants being used. This is a massive error when Ku-ring-gai has already seen a 25% increase in population since 2006 and the character of all our suburbs have been altered as a result.

The current study has divided Ku-ring-gai into 8 local character areas, Green Fingers (the suburbs bordering National Parks), Ku-ring-gai Ridge and Centres (Along the Pacific Highway ridgeline and St Ives centre), Northern Plateau (Wahroonga to Pymble and St Ives), Western Slopes (South Turramurra to south Wahroonga), West Pymble, Lower West (West Lindfield), Heritage Core (Roseville to Gordon) and North Turramurra Table.

By defining and dissecting suburbs into Character Areas, the manner in which each suburb

has developed independently, with the advent of the rail line or the move from agriculture, is lost. The rationale of how each suburb has grown over the past 150 years is essential to its character.

In the online survey, each area has a character statement for comment and to add special places. We urge you to take the opportunity to participate, just follow this link [Ku-ring-gai Council - Ku-ring-gai Local Character Study \(nsw.gov.au\)](https://www.kuringgai.nsw.gov.au/ku-ring-gai-local-character-study). The deadline is 18<sup>th</sup> December.

**As a community we believe that Ku-ring-gai deserves better than what is little more than a superficial approach to a critical Character Study.** The future impact of further degradation of our area's heritage, streetscape and character is at stake if there is not a more professional approach to identifying and conserving Ku-ring-gai's special local character.

## PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Dear Members

Oh what a year! I hope that you are well and have managed to cope with this strange year. It appears life will continue to be a little more challenging until the corona virus comes under control with a vaccine into 2021 - 2022. It will be nice to know normal life again.

Thankfully after seeking an exemption for 6 months from the NSW Fair Trading, we held the FOKE AGM on Wednesday 16 September. As part of the agenda we amended the Constitution to allow FOKE to hold any meetings by electronic communication.

October saw the finalisation of the Draft Housing Strategy which we reported in our last communication by email. We look forward to the State Government accepting the scaled back strategy relying on current controls and capacity. We thank MPs Alister Henskens and Jonathan O'Dea for their efforts in securing this result.

Council is now commencing the first phase of a community consultation for the Ku-ring-gai Local Character Study. Submissions must be lodged by 18 December.

There is also another community consultation request for the Ku-ring-gai Heritage Study, with an extended deadline of 23rd December. There are details attached in the newsletter for members wishing to make a submission on both of these extremely important documents which will determine the look and character of our suburbs for years to come.

Last month we arranged a tree planting ceremony in memory of

long standing FOKE member and outstanding community volunteer, Phillip Langley. This was arranged with the kind assistance of Ku-ring-gai Council in the Gordon Park. Members of Phillip's family attended as well as a number of representatives of community organisations and social groups with which he was involved. We thank Wally Knowles a member of FOKE for assisting with the arrangements.

Due to COVID-19 restrictions we will be unable to attend the local Primary School prize Assembly Awards where FOKE presents a prize each year to students at East Lindfield and Lindfield Public School in memory of past committee members Jan Langley and Jean Posen.

Our inaugural Macquarie University prize for the Environment was awarded to Max McLennan-Gillings for excellence in his Bachelor of Environment, majoring in Earth and Spatial Science.

With postage costs mounting plus the high number of members having email access, we are planning to send newsletters by electronic form rather than by post. This will allow us to embed relevant links into the documents for use by members and improved timeliness of communication. If you would prefer to receive FOKE correspondence by mail please let me know at [info@foke.org.au](mailto:info@foke.org.au)

We extend our best wishes to you and your family for a very happy Christmas and a healthy and fulfilling New Year.

Kind regards

**Kathy Cowley**

President



Cr Cheryl Szatow planting the Phillip Langley Memorial Tree

### 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)**

President: Kathy Cowley

Vice-President: Janine Kitson

Treasurer: Tanya Wood

Minutes Secretary:

Katrina Pickles

#### **Committee:**

Ursula Bonzol

Carolyn Darby

Janet Harwood

Denise Hendy

Dinah Warner

Tanya Wood

#### **Facebook:**

Friendsokuringgai



## Ku-ring-gai Housing Strategy Update

As emailed to members in October, Ku-ring-gai Council voted not to proceed with the Draft Housing Strategy with its increased heights and extended areas of high and medium density zones.

FOKE has consistently stated that our analysis has shown that there was no need to change existing zoning to meet the Greater Sydney Commission housing targets.

The Draft Housing Strategy was flawed in concentrating on the four local centres of Lindfield, Gordon, Turramurra and St Ives in providing the targeted housing numbers. This meant that these centres would suffer heavy impacts on their character, amenity and environment unnecessarily, as Ku-ring-gai would over-deliver on requirements when existing controls in the other areas were taken up.

After many objections from the community to the Strategy, including MPs Alister Henskens and Jonathan O'Dea, Council adopted a Housing Strategy that would provide new housing to 2036 from existing capacity within current planning controls.

**The Greater Sydney Commission housing targets are now redundant, with the Federal Budget predicting almost 450,000 fewer people in NSW by 2022, with the national population 1 million smaller than expected.**

This is due to the Covid-19 crisis of closing borders, with its impact on current and future immigration, plus the prediction of fewer babies as a typical result in times of economic uncertainty.

Demographers are predicting that the combination of these elements will result in a reduction of 4% to earlier population forecasts to 2040, with the largest impacts felt by NSW and Victoria.



## Draft Ku-ring-gai Heritage Strategy

This important Strategy is currently available for community comment.

Both the Greater Sydney Region Plan and the North District Plan state the objective of 'identifying, conserving and enhancing environmental heritage'.

Ku-ring-gai's Local Strategic Plan and Local Strategic Statement have a priority of 'protecting the identity and visual character of Ku-ring-gai by conserving, protecting and responsibly managing its environmental heritage.'

As such, based on a range of heritage studies completed since the comprehensive 1987 Ku-ring-gai Heritage study was undertaken, heritage items' documentation will be updated. We recommend, those items not yet listed need to be reassessed.

The Strategy aims to commence a thorough indigenous heritage study and update planning controls for improved heritage protection in the Development Control Plan.

The strategy takes a wide view of heritage as extending to the protection of settings, views and the wider precincts surrounding assets. It aims to focus on areas interfacing with heritage assets to ensure development is sympathetic and does not compromise heritage identity.

This is something that FOKE has been pursuing for a number of years.

Conservation of significant mid-late 20<sup>th</sup> century development is added to the list of priorities reflecting a number of buildings of architectural significance.

**The Heritage Strategy will form conservation and protection outcomes in Ku-ring-gai for the future and FOKE recommends should be supported by a thorough and detailed Heritage assessment.**

It is important to provide your input into this key strategy. Just use the link below. The deadline for comment is now 23rd December.

Here is the link:

[Ku-ring-gai Council - Draft Ku-ring-gai Heritage Strategy \(nsw.gov.au\)](https://www.ku-ring-gai.nsw.gov.au/heritage)

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



## NSW's New 25 Metre Disastrous Land Clearing Code

In October, a new Rural Fire Service (RFS) clearing code was passed by NSW parliament, which will allow rural landowners to clear all vegetation, including trees, 25 metres from their boundaries within their property.

There will also be a Statutory obligation that all public landholders, including local councils and the National Parks and Wildlife Service, must clear all vegetation for 25 metres into the public land along boundaries with private land, when the RFS deems this necessary.

**We fear these laws will cause unsupervised and unrecorded land clearing on a grand scale across NSW.**

Though discussed, clearing in endangered and threatened species habitat has not been protected. Areas of critically endangered ecological communities (CEECs) have not been mapped. These CEECs could be cleared as an unintended consequence.

Furthermore, it is inconceivable during the recession caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, that the Government will enact laws that will potentially cost the State Government and local councils millions of dollars to clear 25 metre firebreaks within and between National Parks and Crown Lands, and adjoining private properties.

The cost implications of this law for state and local governments will be horrendous. No doubt, just as with the introduction of the RFS 10/50 Clearing Code of which FOKE has been so critical, there will be a very quick uptake of the opportunity to have trees removed.

The cost, resourcing and environmental impacts of clearing vast swathes of public land do not appear to have been properly



considered by the NSW State Liberal Cabinet.

As you would be aware, this law will not just be used for bushfire protection, it will also be used for land clearing on an unprecedented scale not even envisaged under the much maligned RFS 10/50 Clearing Code.

While Minister Elliott has said the new code will have regard to issues such as clearing for non-bushfire risk mitigation purposes, how will this be proved in hindsight? That is one of the main problems with the 10/50 Clearing Code and why so many trees were felled, promptly followed by lodgment of a building application.

**These laws will again be de facto land clearing laws.**

This is an irresponsible addition to the code, not recommended by the NSW Bushfire Inquiry, but a political decision to allow more habitat destruction across NSW.

**Join FOKE Now!**  
[www.foke.org.au](http://www.foke.org.au)  
**Gift a Membership  
this Christmas**

## Safe Urban Gardening with VegeSafe

**Max M Gillings, recipient of FOKE's Macquarie University Award**

There is nothing quite so satisfying as growing your own food in your own backyard. As free and fresh as the distance between the garden and kitchen, homegrown produce offers a worry-free alternative to the unknowns of supermarket supply chains.

Often overlooked, however, are the unknowns present in our own homes and gardens. Most gardeners take for granted the safety of fruit and veggies grown in their soil, and in the majority of cases, they would be right to do so. But in some of the most densely populated regions of Australia, decades of industry, traffic emissions, and the extensive use of leaded paint have resulted in potentially harmful accumulations of metals such as lead in residential soils.

Metals in soil do not simply dissipate from the environment. They can be uptaken by plants, animals, and humans, or can migrate into living environments where they accumulate in dust.

At Macquarie University, the citizen science program VegeSafe specialises in the reciprocal assessment of residential contamination. Participants mail us soil from their garden, we analyse it, and return their results along with relevant Australian guidelines and advice on contaminated soils.

In the Ku-ring-gai area, levels of soil contamination found by VegeSafe are typically low. Average lead concentrations in soil are less than a third of the level of concern, with only five percent of gardens exceeding this level. This contrasts with areas such as Sydney Inner City, where lead in over half of tested gardens exceeds Australian guidelines.

However, even in the most contaminated areas, low-cost strategies such as installing raised garden beds filled with clean soil can ensure that fruit and veggies you grow in your garden are safe.

If you are interested in having your soil analysed, please follow the instructions on our website at <https://research.science.mq.edu.au/vegesafe/>.