



April 2008

*Dear FOKE Members*

► **“Our Place –Ku-ring-gai- A Place of National Significance”**

***“Heritage consists of those places and objects that we as a community have inherited from the past and want to hand on to future generations” (Heritage Office NSW website)***

It was pleasing to see so many of our FOKE members and friends at the Launch on Friday 4 April of the National Trust Festival 2008 and FOKE’s display *“Our Place of National Significance – Ku-ring-gai”*. Over 80 people attended the launch in the Gordon Library Meeting Room. As part of the on-going festival activities FOKE has produced a power-point presentation entitled *“Our Place – Ku-ring-gai”* showcasing photographs assembled by FOKE as part of the Ku-ring-gai Council Centenary Grants Programme. The power-point and displays are in the foyer of the Gordon Library and Gordon Council Chambers (Pacific Hwy level) from 5-20 April.

At this launch FOKE presented a book to Mayor Councillor Nick Ebbeck entitled *“A Photographic Record of Sites and Streetscapes Impacted by LEP 194/200/202/204/207 Ku-ring-gai Residential Development Strategy Stage 1”* produced by FOKE, containing a record of 1800 photographs of sites and streetscapes, impacted by rezoning as a consequence of the NSW Government Local Environmental Plan 194/200/202/204/207. Most of the sites and streetscapes lie within the areas of Ku-ring-gai designated in 1997 by the National Trust of Australia (NSW) as Urban Conservation Areas and/or along the railway corridor. We thank Dick Collingridge and Don Palmer, Ku-ring-gai filmmakers, for recording the Launch of National Trust Festival 2008 Friday 4 April, with anticipation of sending a film-clip to Stateline ABC

FOKE undertook the preparation of this publication:

- To create a permanent photographic record of those impacted sites and streetscapes;
- To highlight the direct threat to many of Ku-ring-gai’s heritage-listed , proposed heritage- listed items and contributory items;
- To illustrate the lack of appropriate interface provided by the Ku-ring-gai LEP’s between the sites rezoned for multi-storey developments and adjacent single dwelling sites;
- To expose the direct threat of destruction and loss of Ku-ring-gai’s character and heritage under the Ku-ring-gai LEPs; and
- To provide a visual evidentiary platform to support:
  1. community protest against and resistance to this threat; and
  2. community advocacy and agitation for:
    - the immediate gazettal of Ku-ring-gai’s urban conservation areas
    - the adoption, enactment and enforcement, by governments at all levels, of policies and laws which protect the natural and cultural heritage, not only in Ku-ring-gai but across Australia.

► **FOKE’S ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING – 15 MAY 2008**

FOKE’s 13th Annual General Meeting will be held 15 May at 8.00pm. Please find enclosed our AGM meeting notice with the meeting and venue details. This year Dr Zeny Edwards, President of The National Trust of

Australia (NSW), has kindly accepted our invitation to address us following the conclusion of our AGM. Zeny, a fellow Ku-ring-gai resident and author of a number of excellent publications including “Six of the Best Ku-ring-gai Architects” will speak on the topic of “**DEFENDING OUR HERITAGE**”. Members are encouraged to invite their friends and neighbours. A supper will be served afterwards.

At this meeting we will have our displays “*Our Place of National Significance – Ku-ring-gai*” currently on display in the Gordon Library and Gordon Council Chambers.

### ► **DEVELOPER DONATIONS – PARLIAMENTARY ENQUIRY**

Many of us in Ku-ring-gai have been concerned at what is driving the State Government’s urban consolidation policies and why the government has interfered so directly in the planning of Ku-ring-gai’s Residential Development Strategy (medium density housing rezoning). It is perceived the influence of donations to political parties may have influenced and affected these disastrous planning outcomes for Ku-ring-gai and NSW generally. The Sydney Press is at last revealing some investigations into these links. ICAC is investigating Wollongong Council and allegations of corruption.

The NSW Select Committee on Electoral and Political Party Funding has commenced public consultation into donations to political parties. The committee has identified a number of areas for reform including political donations – amounts, sources and disclosure. The committee, chaired by the Rev Fred Nile is also “to scrutinise the impact of donations on the democratic process.” A number of Ku-ring-gai residents had made written and/or oral submissions to the enquiry. The submissions make interesting reading.

The web link to read public submissions, including many from concerned Ku-ring-gai residents, is:

<http://www.parliament.nsw.gov.au/80/prod/parlament/committee.nsf/V3ListSubmissions&ParentUNID=A8785221B83634ECA25730C00174AF9>

### ► **A PERSPECTIVE ON CURRENT 5 STOREY PROPOSALS – “What is happening to OUR PLACE – Ku-ring-gai?”**

#### **An Engineer’s perspective:**

*“One did not need to wait to see the built outcomes of LEP 194 (5 storey developments) to reasonably anticipate events. One only had to observe the systematic use of ‘weasel words’ for those unaware are those words, frequently used in public language, which are designed to be soft and unthreatening but which in reality have exactly the opposite meaning, normally with negative community outcomes but with the promise of reward to some interest group or another. Disengaged inhabitants shrug off ‘weasel words’ as meaningless but are regrettably untroubled by the more sinister intent they always imply. Unfortunately the “disengaged” residents of our community represent an unhealthy majority.*

*The habitual use of ‘weasel words’ is in 2008 is just the normal way of doing business for the NSW Government and had been for many years.*

*Expressions like “full Community Consultation”, “Retention of Heritage Values” and “Retaining Village Atmosphere” and Sustainable Development” are all code words for something quite different. To discover that the appalling excrescences visited upon Ku-ring-gai in the name of LEP 194, to fulfil the promise of “improved housing choice” and “the invigoration of our villages”, is no more than what was always obvious which was systemic and wanton destruction of a valuable place, essentially for short term profit. The irony seems to be that we got the destruction that was always certain but the profit has proved more elusive and many of the protagonists have quite misjudged the economics and have been seriously burned financially.*

*A recent Article by Elizabeth Farrelly (SMH 22 March 2008) was excellent and observed with sadness that the recurring problem of poor quality development and destruction of valuable heritage has a common origin. It is US. It is the community and its non-caring acceptance of the trashing of our villages and suburbs”*

#### **Also, a contribution by Committee member Jean Posen:**

*“In 1913 Ku-ring-gai council introduced a tree protection policy. It was resolved that “Council would not wantonly destroy any trees that tend to the beauty of a locality but will use their discretion as to what trees shall*

*be cut down and left standing.*" Since then, the Council and the residents of this Municipality have cherished their trees which form a dominant feature of many streets and give Ku-ring-gai its almost unique character.

Unfortunately, the current State Government has other priorities. In 2004 a Local Environmental Plan (No. 194) altered the zoning regulations in nine areas (near railway stations and the St Ives Shopping Centre) so as to convert them from single residence to medium density neighbourhoods. Since November 2004, Ku-ring-gai council has been obliged to approve the construction of **eighty-eight (88)** five storey apartment blocks. Some of these have been built, others are in the process of being built. **Go and look at them.** These generally unattractive boxes now dominate the streetscape and tower above the trees. The traditional gardens with their biodiversity have been replaced by small patches of vegetation containing a few token trees.

When this incompetent and uncaring State Government, if finally kicked out, one of its legacies will be a much diminished national treasure."

FOKE has assembled a complete list of these 88 apartment approvals, along with the applicants/developers names. Refer to website **[www.democracy4sale.org](http://www.democracy4sale.org)** for complete lists and the extent of 'property industry' donations to Federal and State political parties, which makes interesting and disturbing reading.

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## City bursting its urban seams needs some fringe room to expand

**MICHAEL DUFFY**

*Sydney Morning Herald 5-6 April 2008*

This week the State Government received some bad news about its desire to fill Sydney with apartment blocks. A conference organised by the Property Council of Australia heard the Government's objective for 70 per cent of all housing built until 2031 be "infill" (blocks of flats and town-houses in established suburbs) can never happen. There just aren't enough appropriate sites. If correct, this reveals a huge flaw in a plan that is only a few years old.

There has always been popular opposition to the desire to force most new residences to be flats. The argument used by proponents is that the number of people per home is shrinking, so our homes should shrink too.

This ignores the many reasons a couple or a single person might want to live in a house with a yard. They might want to retain the family home or stay in the community they've been part of for decades or need space for a pet or for gardening. They might be a young couple preparing for the arrival of their first child. They might be divorced parents, or grandparents, who want enough space to encourage children to come to stay.

These are all legitimate desires, often of tremendous emotional significance in people's lives. It's grubby social engineering for planners and politicians to force people into housing that will make a lot of this behaviour impossible. Naturally, people don't want it: research shows 85 per cent of Australians who live in flats would rather live in a free-standing house. There's no evidence many people living in houses would prefer a flat.

But while it has long been known that urban consolidation is undesirable, the research presented this week takes the argument a step further, suggesting it is also unachievable. Malcolm Aikman, a property economist with the real estate information consultancy Urbis, says meeting the Government's urban consolidation infill target for Sydney would require the equivalent of carpeting the entire municipality of Ku-ring-gai with four-storey blocks of flats.

"Where are the sites going to come from?" he asked. The problem is that most of the previously empty space in existing suburbs has now been built on. But even this has not been enough. Aikman said: 'At no time in the past has Sydney delivered a number of flats that suggests it can meet its current targets.' And from now on, everything gets harder and more expensive as infill increasingly involves pulling down existing residences, with more uncertain and drawn-out fights with neighbours and councils.

"My theory is that Sydney's done its inner-city development," Aikman said.

He believes Sydney faces a shortfall of 84,000 infill dwellings and will need to find an extra 8200 hectares on the fringe to build new greenfield housing.

If Aikman is right, this will fill the planners' hearts with horror, because one of their often-asserted beliefs is that Sydney has pretty much run out of land for expansion.

Not so, according to an American urban planning and transport expert at the conference, Wendell Cox, a critic of urban consolidation who runs the consultancy Demographia, said only 0.6 per cent of NSW was urbanised and there was still plenty of spare room on the Cumberland Plain (not to mention the nearby Southern Highlands).

Cox also commented on another argument often heard from promoters of urban consolidation: that if Sydney gets any bigger, getting around the place become too difficult. He noted that Sydney is only the 41st-biggest city in world, in terms of its geographic spread. Many cities bigger than ours are easier get around: Sydney's problem is a relative lack of freeways and other transport infrastructure.

Experience in American cities shows that with urban consolidation travel comes even harder. Proponents say increased density makes more public transport viable, and this reduces road congestion. But we now know that most trips in areas where density is increased continue to be taken by car, thereby increasing congestion.

There's a growing acceptance that urban consolidation has been a disaster helping to push up house prices by restricting land supply on the fringes.

Cox even believes it has contributed to the scope of the mortgage market collapse in America, by inflating money that's gone into housing. In his view, an affordable median house is one that costs three times the median household income. There are plenty of cities in America where you can buy a house for that much. But in Sydney, the multiple is 8.5.

Urban consolidation and the resulting price rises have produced problems including infrastructure stress, congestion, the housing affordability crisis, the rental crisis, the flight of thousands of people to Queensland in search of affordable housing (so pushing up prices there), and stagnation in the building sector (and therefore the state economy) as construction declines because fewer people can afford a house.

For years many commentators have denied that restricting land supply has contributed much to increased housing prices, preferring to nominate easier credit and rising government taxes and charges. These last two certainly played a role, but more people are starting to acknowledge the importance of land.

Ross Elliott, until recently executive director of the Property Council of Australia, told the conference: "The issue of land supply is now front and centre, even if only a few years ago we were in denial about this."

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**► URBAN DENSIFICATION OF KU-RING-GAI = DESTRUCTION OF HERITAGE AREAS**

*Despite repeated approaches to the State Government, Ku-ring-gai's Urban Conservation Areas (UCAs) remain ungazetted. The heritage rich areas of Ku-ring-gai are being destroyed by inappropriate urban densification development. This need not happen. Examples of sensitive urban density development do exist. The new developments are not providing affordable housing nor do they represent real housing choice.*



**Killara Lorne Avenue heritage item**  
**"Surrounded" by 5 storeys bordering UCA 10**



**Gordon Cecil St heritage listed item**  
**Adjoining 5 storeys National Trust UCA 12**



**Killara Cul worth Ave**  
**Rezoned 5 Storeys UCA10**



**Killara Stanhope Rd heritage listed item**  
**Adjoining 5 storey rezoning UCA10**



**Wahroonga Munderah Street (demolished)  
Rezoned 5 storeys National Trust UCA 26**



**Wahroonga Munderah Street  
Rezoned 5 storeys National Trust UCA 26**



**Before: Killara Marian St local vista southern side  
Rezoned 5 storeys National Trust UCA 10**



**After: Killara Marian Street local vista southern side  
National Trust UCA 10**



**Roseville Victoria Avenue  
Rezoned 5 storeys National Trust UCA 3**



**Gordon Yarabah Ave heritage listed item  
Adjoining 5 storey rezoning National Trust UCA**



**Lindfield Burleigh St Before**



**Lindfield Burleigh St After**



Before Milray St Lindfield Rezoned for 5 storeys



After: Milray St development Lindfield

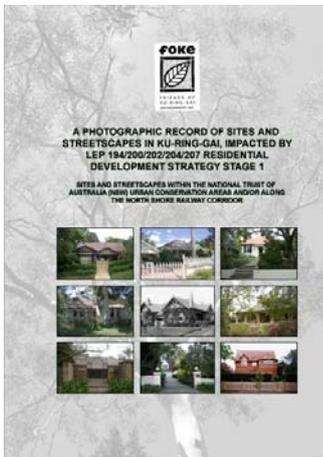


Roseville Victoria Ave  
Rezoned 5 storeys National Trust UCA 3



Roseville Victoria Ave  
Rezoned 5 storeys National Trust UCA 3

THE PHOTOS OF THE HOMES AND STREETSCAPES ABOVE, REPRESENT A JUST A SMALL PART OF WHAT IS THREATENED AND OF THE LIKELY TYPE OF MUTLI STOREY DEVELOPMENT THAT WILL REPLACE THESE FINE HOMES..



FOKE's Book "A Photographic Record of Sites and Streetscapes Impacted by LEP 194/200/202/204/207 Ku-ring-gai Residential Development Strategy Stage 1" (Front cover pictured) will be able to be viewed at our Annual General Meeting on 15 May.

*Yours sincerely Foke Committee*

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

**FOKE MEMBERSHIP RENEWALS DUE FOR 2008**

**FOKE RECOMMENDS "OUR PLACE OF NATIONAL SIGNIFICANCE - KU-RING-GAI" EXHIBITION**

On at the Gordon Library Foyer and Gordon Council Chambers, Level 4 (Pacific Highway street level entrance) to view a power-point presentation and display for National Trust Festival NSW 5-20 April 2008