

foke



FRIENDS OF
KU-RING-GAI
ENVIRONMENT INC.

PRESIDENT'S REPORT 23 MAY 2018

'Sydney's much-lauded new urban policies are keen to reinforce the image of Sydney as a city on the move. But while these policies are touted as game changers, they represent a significant step backwards.

Most worryingly, they continue an unhealthy trend within our urban governance; one that eschews critical analysis of the city's urban condition in favour of projecting an aestheticised image of Sydney as a "global city". This masks the city's real needs and possibilities.

The Greater Sydney Commission's new metropolitan plan, A Metropolis of Three Cities, exemplifies this paradox. When measured against its own high-minded rhetoric, one thing is clear: the plan is a failure. Like its predecessor, 2014's forgettable Plan for Growing Sydney, it bypasses any critical analysis of Sydney's long-term urban structure in favour of superficial discursive tropes ("great places") and spatial metaphors ("a metropolis of three cities"), the main purpose of which appears to be validating the government's existing investment commitments.

The notion that responsibility for the plan is outsourced to a supposedly independent agency is an illusion; the GSC is a crown agency like any other arm of government. At no point does the plan question the wisdom of the government's growing list of big-spending projects, despite the obvious scope for doing so. How could it, with the Premier's benign visage featured prominently within the opening pages?

The result is a document that seems desperate to prove itself, but that in the process neglects its core function. The rhetoric is simply not matched by substance. It is a golden rule of planning that if you have to describe something as "visionary" or "innovative" (or, for that matter, "smart", "exciting" or "game-changing"), then it is unlikely to be any of those things.

Nauseatingly, the plan boasts of "new thinking" that simply rehashes ideas borrowed from elsewhere. Concepts like the "30-minute city", "green grid" or "liveability" are not new; the problem is that they don't go to the heart of why the city has evolved in the manner that it has, nor why it even exists in the first place.' (Sydney plans ignore problems facing residents to sell city to the world, Sydney Morning Herald, 17 April 2018)

This quote has been taken from a recent *Sydney Morning Herald* article and outlines some of the criticism of the Greater Sydney Commission's (GSC) Greater Sydney Plans.

For the next few years the increased population housing plans will be directed by the GSC and will start to play out across Greater Sydney and Ku-ring-gai. As a community group we will have to continue our hard work to convince our council and the North District Commissioner Dr Dearing, to work to prevent further heritage loss and environmental destruction within Ku-ring-gai. The deep excavation of building sites to build the new apartments over the past 14 years has impacted our heritage and threatened ecological communities significantly.

Tony Rescei, President of Save Our Suburbs, sums up his views on the GSC's plans:

'After two years of perfecting its spin the Greater Sydney Commission has released its plan for Sydney which it says "will bring to life the vision of Greater Sydney as a vibrant and sustainable metropolis". The document is full of vague language such as "30-minute city", "liveability", "productivity", "sustainability" and "city for people" with no credible evidence provided for achieving this. Orwellian language manipulation is evident, such as terming 8 to 12-storey high rise as "medium density"

In reality the plan is merely a cover for developers to impose more and more high density into our communities. It is an inexorable march to the high-density Asian city model.

Just imagine the impact on your area of the mandated additional dwellings. The result will be hugely increased congestion, unaffordable housing, adverse health impacts (such as a 70% increase in psychosis), reduction in housing choice and excessive greenhouse gas emissions (in high-rise per person energy consumption and embodied energy is double that of single-residential). As we have previously shown, the 30 minute city is a complete figment of the imagination. No example of such a city is provided or a credible example given on how it would function. Work travel time in large low-density cities is around 25 minutes, much less than the 45 minutes in high-density Hong-Kong or Tokyo.'

● GREATER SYDNEY COMMISSION – NORTH DISTRICT PLANS APPROVED

As reported in previous editions, former Planning Minister Robert Stokes commissioned the Greater Sydney Commission (GSC) headed by Chief Commissioner Lucy Turnbull and town planner CEO Sarah Hill in 2016. Mrs Turnbull is not only chairing the GSC but also sits in on NSW Cabinet discussions.

The GSC's role is leading metropolitan planning for the NSW Government. Over the past year the Friends of Ku-ring-gai Environment (FOKE) committee has attended two briefing sessions at Parramatta on the Greater Sydney Plans. FOKE submitted a written response to the draft District Plans, which were on public exhibition for comment until 31 March 2017. A copy of the FOKE submission on the North District Plan is on the FOKE website.

Subsequent to the AGM in May 2017, FOKE met with Dr Dearing, the North District Commissioner, to discuss the flaws in the draft North District Plans and how they will impact Ku-ring-gai. Disappointingly, Dr Dearing did not appear overly concerned about the issues we raised concerning Ku-ring-gai's heritage and environment, which is clearly being severely impacted from tree loss, deep soil excavation and overdevelopment.

Dr Dearing's priority and agenda is clearly tasked with increasing the Ku-ring-gai population and in providing additional dwellings in Ku-ring-gai and is working closely with staff and council for that achievement.

The GSC has proposed 4,000 new dwellings for Ku-ring-gai over the next five years. We believe council staff has advised councillors to expect 16,000 new dwellings within the next 20 years.

We have been told by Dr Dearing and MP Jonathan O'Dea that the 4,000 proposed new dwellings are already built into the current plans. However, staff is advising councillors that more rezoning will be expected.

It is now fact that over 10,000 new dwellings have been approved in Ku-ring-gai since 2004. The 10,000 target to cover 2004 to 2031 was set by the Labor Government. Subsequently, our Liberal MPs promised to keep to the 10,000. Thankfully, Jonathan O'Dea MP is still keeping his promise. However, we have not had that confirmation from MP Alister Henskens SC. Therefore, it will be quite wrong if Ku-ring-gai is targeted or zoned for any additional dwellings as there are already thousands of potential new dwellings zoned for in the combined Local Centres and Ku-ring-gai Local Environmental Plans (LEPs).

Essentially, the community were misinformed by the Council as to the actual dwelling yield potential contained within the combined Local Centres LEP and Ku-ring-gai LEP. We believe there could be upwards of 4,000 plus dwellings that still could be yielded from the existing plans. It is interesting that the developers have cherry-picked all the residential land first and not the shops and businesses, probably due to the higher purchase price!

Subsequently, several council-owned properties have now been reclassified from 'community' to 'operational' land allowing the land and properties to be sold and/or redeveloped. Council has zoned some of these properties for additional high-density residential unit development up to seven storeys in height. These include council car parks, public buildings, libraries and halls and involve developments such as the Lindfield Hub site, the Turramurra Hub site including the Turramurra's Little Village Park, the Lindfield Library site, and the Gordon Council Chambers. Council's calculations for the Local Centre's LEP never included the new dwellings proposed for council land or properties.

FOKE will continue to lobby the Council and our MPs as well as gather community support to maintain our 2031 target at 10,000 new dwellings.

The Lindfield Town Centre on the east side of the railway is the only local centre of the six town centres targeted for high-density zoning (apart from new units along Lindfield Avenue, Lindfield and the Gordon Post Office site) that has been redeveloped in the last 10 years!

● **ALMAGAMATION BACKDOWN BY STATE GOVERNMENT**

After a strenuous and stressful two-year battle, in late July 2017, Ku-ring-gai Council and other councils fighting off forced amalgamation received the good news and decision they had been lobbying for—a complete backdown and abandonment of forced amalgamations by the Berejiklian Government.

The Court of Appeals undeniable win announced by Justice Sackville on 27 March 2017 was a huge win for the residents of Ku-ring-gai and those of us who had been directly involved in the campaign to Save Ku-ring-gai. Ku-ring-gai Council was awarded costs.

It was also of great news to other councils who had lodged appeals based on the Ku-ring-gai decision. However, councils are still waiting for the State Government to pay the significant court costs awarded to them.

There is no doubt that the NSW Government's forced amalgamation process was a farcical, destructive and highly expensive process for both affected councils and the State Government.

A number of other Sydney councils that also challenged the Land and Environment Court rulings in the NSW Supreme Court of Appeal—Mosman, North Sydney, Strathfield, Hunter's Hill and Lane Cove—were saved. Woollahra Council was successful in its appeal to the High Court and was also saved from amalgamation.

It is apparent that politicians only understand a community's priorities when we exert public pressure and at the ballot box. It is important to hold our politicians responsible for their decisions.

● **SAVE KU-RING-GAI AND SAVE OUR COUNCILS COALITION (SOCC)**

During the last two years FOKE worked closely with and supported the Save Our Council's Coalition (SOCC) to oppose forced amalgamation and attended rallies and meetings with groups from all over NSW opposed to mergers. SOCC also campaigned across NSW regional and country areas with great success resulting in the National Party back down on the policy of forced amalgamation.

Committee members attended a number of media conferences organised by SOCC in the Domain, behind Parliament House. With the various politicians opposed to forced amalgamation holding the FOKE banners and signs, we achieved quite a prominence in media broadcasts.

Following the Orange by-election result and pressure from the Nationals, the Berejiklian Government withdrew forced amalgamations in country and regional NSW. Voter backlash in the North Sydney and Manly by-elections and several wins by councils in the Supreme Court, forced the State Government to back down.

As for FOKE, we will continue to stay alert along with SOCC on this issue, as we believe amalgamation is still a policy of the Berejiklian Government. The government is refusing to demerge some councils that were amalgamated and who did not instigate legal challenges.

● **THE BETTER PLANNING NETWORK NSW**

FOKE continues to be involved as a member and supporter of the Better Planning Network (BPN), a widespread community organisation of approximately 430 community groups across NSW. FOKE committee members attended the AGM in 2017 and voted in a new enthusiastic committee to maintain work towards its mission to get a fairer, more transparent and accountable planning system in NSW. With the current State Government legislating away planning standards and controls these goals remain more important than ever. In the current NSW political environment, the State Government is continually stripping away local councils' powers and community involvement particularly in the protection of the

environment and in controlling urban development. These impediments will be seen as a challenge but will not deter the Better Planning Network's mission.

● **INDEPENDENT HEARING AND ASSESSMENT PANELS (IHAPS)**

In another move to strip councils of their development approvals, the State Government introduced legislation to appoint Independent Hearing and Assessment Panels (IHAPs), which came into effect from March 2018. The Minister for Planning says IHAPS will benefit communities by bringing transparency and accountability to development assessments. However, we believe these panels will just be another rubber stamp for development!

Late last year the NSW Government passed legislation requiring every council in Sydney, to establish IHAPs for their area. Fifteen councils across Sydney and Wollongong were already voluntarily using IHAPs.

The panels have been introduced by the Berejiklian Government to consider what the Government believes to be the most contentious and complex applications. These include multi-million dollar developments, development applications (DAs) with a high potential for corruption risk, sensitivity or of strategic importance.

IHAPs will maintain a standard model comprising a Chair, two independent expert members, all approved by the Planning Minister, and one local community representative. The community member, selected by the Council, will represent the geographical area within the LGA of the proposed development so as to provide local perspective.

Councillors, property developers and real estate agents are prohibited under the legislative amendments from sitting on the panels.

The members and Chairs that make up the pool for IHAPs are a mix of experts in planning, architecture, heritage, the environment, urban design, economics, traffic and transport, law, engineering, tourism, or government and public administration. The Chair must have expertise in law or government and public administration.

Ku-ring-gai Council's IHAP panel members are: Justice Robert Neville (Angus) Talbot, Chair; Jacqueline Townsend and Kevin Hoffman, Chair (Alternates); Gerard Turrisi, Expert Panel Member; Sandra Robinson, Tony Blue, Michael Leavey, Cheramie Marsden, James Colman (Expert Panel Member Alternates); Frank Ko, Peter Thornton, Elaine Malicki and Suzanne Jolly (Community Members).

● **HERITAGE CONSERVATION AREAS (HCAs) – Deferred HCAs**

Over the past 14 years we have watched the gradual degrading and diminution of the National Trust (NT) recommended 28 Ku-ring-gai Inter War Heritage Conservation Areas that were studied and classified in 1997. In 2000, 2008 and 2010 Ku-ring-gai Council commissioned a series of heritage studies preparatory to having these HCAs gazetted.

The State Labor Government in 2000 intervened by imposing a Residential Development Strategy in areas considered to be of high heritage status along the rail corridor. These were subsequently zoned for high-rise development. The Labor Government's intervention to

prevent the Council from protecting those areas by heritage listing has resulted in intrusive development and an overall reduction in the area previously covered in the original HCAs. It was not until 2013 that Ku-ring-gai achieved its first gazetted HCAs. However, the National Trust classified heritage areas had been diminished due the intrusive high-density development.

Several areas were deferred for later consideration including the Middle Harbour Road HCA and the Pymble HCA. In 2017, the Middle Harbour Road HCA was gazetted following a protracted six-year programme to regain its HCA status. Unfortunately, the area covered under this HCA is one third of the original HCA.

● **SINGLE DWELLING ZONING UNDER ATTACK**

NSW Planning's proposed legislation, called the draft Medium Density Housing Code—to which FOKE made a submission—has been approved. Its aims are to extend medium density development throughout current low density single dwelling (R2) zones in residential areas as complying development. As with complying development, developers will NOT need to get development application approval, with neighbours only required to be informed of these developments without the right to object. As long as the developments meet a predetermined set of guidelines they will be fast-tracked through Council. Currently the R3 zone has been specifically designed to deliver medium density. The proposed plan is to allow medium density development on all residential (single dwelling) R2 land in NSW with a street frontage of 12m or more and a minimum lot size of 400sqm, with up to five townhouses on a lot of only 1,000 square metres.

The medium density complying developments include townhouses, terraces, manor homes (2 up, 2 down) and dual occupancies. This proposal applies a blanket rezoning for medium density (with minor exceptions) to all low-density residential R2 land. It does not take into account the cumulative effects of intensifying development on local infrastructure, services, traffic, street car parking, social services and amenities. It overrides local environment plans and planning controls to the detriment of residents. FOKE's submission argued against this extension of complying developments.

Currently, Ku-ring-gai Council's LEP does not permit multiple dwellings in the R2 zones. There will need to be close monitoring of any proposed amendments to the Ku-ring-gai LEP as there could be pressure from the State Government and the Department of Planning to propose an amendment to Council's LEP to allow medium density housing in R2 single residential zones. This new medium density code will commence in July 2018.

● **NEW BIODIVERSITY LAWS: STATE GOVERNMENT'S WAR ON THE ENVIRONMENT**

Since November 2016, following FOKE's submission, we have been tracking the State Government's introduction of what we believe to be the flawed, reckless and biased Biodiversity Conservation and Local Land Services Amendment Act. Despite thousands of submissions against these anti-environment laws, the government caved into pressure from National Party colleagues to approve this legislation. Some of the strongest criticism came from Professor Possingham and The Wentworth Group of Concerned Scientists, who described the funding changes as a 'taxpayer subsidy for farmers to degrade land'.

The Nature Conservation Council (NCC)—of which FOKE is a member—promised to repeal the legislation. With the support of the Environment Defenders Office (EDO) the NCC challenged the NSW Land Clearing Code and it was declared invalid by the Land and Environment Court on 9 March this year. Regrettably, the Minister remade the destructive Code without amendment on the very same day as the Court declared it invalid and it is now in effect. The State Government’s environmental credibility is now severely damaged by the new Code which seriously puts wildlife, trees and climate at serious risk.

These Biodiversity Conservation and Land Management Reforms repeal several existing Acts, in particular the Native Vegetation Act 2003, Threatened Species Conservation Act 1995 and the Nature Conservation Trust Act 2001. Also repealed are the animal and plant provisions of the National Parks and Wildlife Act 1974.

We need a Government that will protect, restore and ensure resilience for this State’s precious biodiversity. As the EDO states in the March 2018 donor newsletter: *‘Challenging the failures of the Government minister to adhere to laws made by Parliament is vital to defending democratic principles and the rule of law.’*

We urge members to write to and remind our State representatives, MPs Alister Henskens SC and Jonathan O’Dea, that parliamentarians have a responsibility to ensure the Code has ecological rigour, transparency and clarity and is consistent with the principles of Ecologically Sustainable Development (ESD)—none of which is exhibited in the newly passed legislation.

These actions by the State Government are contrary to their pre-election promises of ‘enhancing the state’s biodiversity to benefit current and future generations’. Another promise broken to favour a pro-development agenda to weaken nature protection laws!

We need stronger biodiversity laws—not weaker ones. We need a new vision to protect, restore and ensure resilience for our precious biodiversity so that our future generations can enjoy a walk through the bush and be delighted by its precious wildlife. FOKE remains strongly opposed to these detrimental reforms to the protection of our vegetation and wildlife and will continue to use every opportunity to press our MPs and the Minister to amend or repeal this legislation.

● RECLASSIFICATION OF COMMUNITY LAND

Council has voted on the Public Hearing recommendation to reclassify and develop the Little Village Park and to incorporate the land as part of the massive commercial development of the Turramurra Hub on the Turramurra car park site adjacent to Coles. This is despite the recommendation of an independent inquiry to retain this space in the middle of a future massive town-hub development. This vote illustrates the development-driven system that the residents of NSW are enduring by way of councils’ decisions with support/prompting from the State Government.

As many as 26 community assets are being reclassified and/or are now reclassified for sale and re-development because of an action Ku-ring-gai Council triggered with the irrational decision to purchase the ‘SUN’ building (828 Pacific Highway, Gordon), which is still not fully utilised, even after several years.

In our effort to publicise and save Turramurra's Little Village Park we collected and submitted over 300 petition signatures to the Chair of the Public Hearing and arranged a walk to highlight its plight during the National Trust Heritage Festival in May last year.

Work is progressing slowly on the proposed Lindfield Hub on the west side of Lindfield. Council has recently appointed a seven-member resident's reference committee which will provide advice to the Council on community related development outcomes.

The committee has been established as a platform for community, stakeholders and Council to collaborate on aspects of the Lindfield Village Hub urban renewal project, which include place-making, environmental sustainability, social procurement, service delivery, communication and design. It was reconfirmed by Council in May 2018 that the Lindfield Library site and its associated community rooms will continue to operate in its current site or an alternate site within Lindfield until the Lindfield Community Hub is operational.

We remain concerned that so many council owned properties and open space, such as libraries, community halls and car parks are being developed or sold off for high-rise development. Some of this land, such as the Lindfield Library site, is being proposed for sale. This land will be lost forever and never be returned back to the community. With the Ku-ring-gai population expected to rise by 50 percent over the next decade, we need more public facilities—not less. The ongoing reduction in lack of open space and community facilities per capita is an area of great concern for FOKE as it should be for all Ku-ring-gai stakeholders.

● FOKE WEBSITE AND FACEBOOK

FOKE's webmaster Ursula Bonzol has been continuing the job of updating our website on a regular basis for which we are very grateful. Graham Lewis, our former webmaster, very kindly offers advice when needed. We hope you, our members, are finding it useful as a reference point. Our website records up to date media releases and newsletters and specific information on issues we campaign on throughout the year.

FOKE's *Friendsofkringgai* Facebook page, which has been operating for more than two years is attracting an increasing readership. It is continually updated with relevant newspaper articles on the environment, developments and political stories pertaining to FOKE's interests! We are finding it is a great way to advertise our events, highlight changes and proposed changes to our community, gain an insight into residents' views, and it is a very effective way to share information.

As ever, we encourage members to log on, contribute to the discussions, 'like' our Facebook page and post comments to the articles and news, such as the electronic newsletters.

● FOKE'S SUBMISSIONS - GOVERNMENT POLICIES AND PLANS

FOKE has made submissions over the year to the State Government, Ku-ring-gai Council and the Greater Sydney Commission and responses to local planning decisions.

These include: 'The Missing Middle'—SEPP changes allowing medium density in single residential areas; Amendments to the Biodiversity Act; Amendments to the Environmental Planning and Assessment Act 1979; the Crown Land Legislation. The Berejiklian

Government continues to ignore all objections from the community or informed groups and has proceeded to adopt these destructive laws.

FOKE committee members attended the workshop and presentation on the Ku-ring-gai Council Community Strategic Plan and encouraged our members to also make a submission. The Draft Community Strategic Plan is now available for comment on the Ku-ring-gai Council website until June 8, 2018. We encourage all members to make their opinions on this Plan known to Council.

● **FOKE's ENVIRONMENTAL SUB-COMMITTEE**

This FOKE sub-committee was set up three years ago and continues to highlight the plight of Ku-ring-gai's Blue Gum High Forest, the Sydney Turpentine Ironbark Forest and the cumulative impacts of zoning areas for high density development in environmentally sensitive areas. We highlight this plight with several walks which are planned for and conducted during the National Trust Heritage Festivals.

We regularly enter FOKE's National Trust Heritage Festival Walks into the National Trust Heritage Awards, for which we received a Highly Commended Award in 2016.

Janine Kitson and Janet Harwood again planned and conducted the 2017 events. Through their efforts this year FOKE was able to donate \$1,300 to the Environmental Defenders Office (EDO) following the successful raffle and lunch at Pecorino, Gordon. Another EDO fund-raising lunch was organised for FOKE's 2018 National Trust Heritage Festival.

With Council plans to commercially redevelop the Turramurra Ray Street Precinct and public car park with seven-storey development, the sub-committee has stepped up a campaign to highlight the lack of open space and parkland planned for such a large commercial development.

As highlighted earlier in the report, the Little Village Park, a should-be-heritaged space adjacent to the Turramurra Rail station, is now under threat from commercial development as a result of the Council's adverse decision to rezone it following the reclassification process from community to operational. The Public Hearing Chair reported that the park should remain and not be rezoned. However, Council ignored the recommendation and has rezoned the park for commercial development of up to seven storeys. The current park and open space are important to Turramurra to offset what is being lost to development on the carpark, so the sub-committee is continuing its campaign to stop the park from being developed.

One of the three heritage walks for the 2017 National Trust Heritage Festival included Sheldon Forest. The walk, in celebration of the 10th Anniversary of the incorporation of a parcel of Blue Gum High Forest into Dalrymple Hay Forest, was led by Nancy Pallin. The walk was well attended so a great success and an important reminder of what a significant area the Dalrymple Hay Nature Reserve is, not only for Ku-ring-gai but for NSW.

Nancy Pallin was the former Chair of the Blue Gum High Forest Group, which included FOKE, that campaigned to save this extremely important remnant area of the Sydney forest. Less than 1 percent of the original forest area remains today. The purchase and incorporation of this piece of land was included in the Nature Reserve 10 years ago.

We are extremely concerned that the local heritage listing for the iconic house called *Hillview* and its surrounding proposed heritage conservation area will be removed by the Council to make way for the State Government to sell the site for high rise development. The *Hillview* precinct will be a real loss to the cultural heritage of Ku-ring-gai and Sydney. Disturbingly, *Hillview's* historic buildings have been allowed to become so run-down and neglected that the NSW Health Department have closed some down and will not spend the necessary money to restore them. We will be asking MP Alister Henskens SC to ensure the local heritage listed *Hillview* buildings and stables are not torn down or demolished by developers. FOKE has been lobbying the Council and MPs to retain *Hillview* as an important heritage Turramurra community centre. Our annual National Trust Festival walk incorporating a stroll through Hillview and Sheldon Forest is always well attended and appreciated.

Janine Kitson and Janet Harwood deserve our gratitude and thanks for the months of planning and preparation in arranging the collection of walks for the past three years.

● **FOKE's WORK IN THE WIDER COMMUNITY.**

○ FOKE continued to liaise and engage with Ku-ring-gai local community groups on issues such as state and local planning and, on the proposed forced amalgamation with Hornsby Council, joined forces with several local community groups under the banner of 'Save Ku-ring-gai'.

○ FOKE continues to be approached by students studying town planning, architecture and journalism seeking our knowledge and information on planning issues in Ku-ring-gai.

○ It is an honour each year to award the FOKE *Jan Langley Prize* for environment and sustainability excellence at East Lindfield Public School. In December 2017 the award was presented to Year Six student Tyne Jones. As in past years, Jan's husband Philip Langley made the presentation and this year he was accompanied by FOKE's Vice President, Janine Kitson.

We thank Philip Langley for also kindly assisted us to set up the AGM and FOKE display boards and signs that he kindly stores for us during the rest of the year.

Following the passing of committee member Jean Posen on 26 January 2017, the committee made the decision to give a yearly award of an Environment prize at the Lindfield Public School in honour of Jean's very long association with FOKE. The inaugural award was presented in December 2017 to Year Six student William Darber. We thank the Lindfield Public School for the opportunity to not only award a deserving student with an environmental prize but also the opportunity to encourage local schools and their students to appreciate and nurture the environment.

○ We thank committee member Carolyn Darby for her fortnightly attendance at Ku-ring-gai Council meetings for the purpose of reporting to FOKE committee meetings matters of importance and interest to be pursued.

- FOKE representatives, along with Better Planning Network affiliates, attended the annual Sydney University Henry Halloran Forum and community forums and planning sessions held by Better Planning Network, in addition to committee meetings of the Save Our Councils Coalition.
- The second set of Sheldon Forest educational signs designed by STEP member John Martyn for which FOKE received a council grant, were installed by council at the Kimbarra Road, Pymble entrance to the forest.

●FOKE COMMITTEE

FOKE's voluntary team of enthusiastic and dedicated committee members have had another busy and productive year.

I want to personally thank – Ursula Bonzol, Carolyn Darby, Janet Harwood, Denise Hendy, Janine Kitson, Katrina Pickles, Kerrie Piper, Dinah Warner and Tanya Wood for their important contribution this year. My thanks also must go to Jill Johnstone who works in the background maintaining FOKE's membership roll, email lists and the printing of labels for posting correspondence to our members.

Special thanks go to Ursula Bonzol and Janine Kitson who collect information, write articles then edit *FOKE Talk* ready for printing. I hope members are enjoying and finding our newsletters newsworthy and interesting.

●FOKE MEMBERSHIP

To our wonderful members. Your continued support is greatly appreciated and valued. We could not go on without you.

In our 24th year of operation we are just as dependent on your support and generosity as we have always been. All community groups are struggling to maintain their membership due to the ageing population and the fact that young parents are pre-occupied with raising their families and working hard to maintain their standard of living and do not seem to have the time to devote to voluntary groups such as FOKE. Time will tell how groups such as ours will continue to survive if the next generation of residents remain too busy or not interested enough to join groups like ours. We rely on you, our members, to encourage family, friends and neighbours to join.

FINALLY

The FOKE committee, as we have in past years 24 years, will continue to keep abreast of planning and development issues and work to the best of our ability towards FOKE's aims and objectives of protecting and enhancing the environment and heritage of Ku-ring-gai. We wish all our members a healthy and fulfilling year ahead.

We look forward to welcoming you to our 24th AGM and Public Meeting in 2019.

In ending I want to leave you with this recent quote.

'For heritage is much more than just artifacts. Heritage is our collective unconscious. Just as a "chain of ponds" creek flows invisibly beneath pasture, keeping it green, so heritage flows beneath our surface, sustaining our emotional and spiritual wellbeing.

Heritage is distilled story, just as honey is distilled sunlight. And like honey, heritage feeds us, enriching our lives with vividness and purpose, giving meaning and identity. At a very real level, heritage is who we are. Our grasp of time, of story, lets us make space meaningful. It lets us create the sacred, self-medicating to quench the deep thirst for reverence.

Yes, we're the tomorrow people, but we'll be better tomorrow people if we're also, deeply, hereditary folk. Like trees, we grow into the future from the soil of the past. Our blossoming requires our rootedness.

It's not an either-or proposition. We must value both. Heritage is a connector, investing our beliefs deep in the material earth. It's not just about history or even respect. For us, no less than Indigenous peoples, it's about love.

Our developers and especially our governments need to grasp this, immediately, while there's still something left to save.'

(Elizabeth Farrelly, *Sydney Morning Herald*, Saturday 28 April 2018 [abridged])

Never truer or more poignant words written!

Kathy Cowley
PRESIDENT