

BRIEFING NOTE FOR MEETING

Paul Fletcher, MP for Bradfield

Thursday 1 February 2024 10.00 am.

Attending:

Kathy Cowley (President of FOKE) Kathy.Cowley@bigpond.com

Janine Kitson (Vice President FOKE) janinemkitson@gmail.com

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Apologies: Jill Green (President STEP) jillpgreen@gmail.com

Federal Government's Housing Policy is driving the NSW Housing Policy

The Albanese government Housing Accord is pushing the NSW Government to set ambitious new targets to boost the supply of new houses. It has emboldened the NSW Governments to introduce draconian and undemocratic planning, rezoning and land release processes. Yet the NSW government does not have sufficient funds to provide necessary infrastructure to support its implementation. It has not done the proper studies to assess the capacity of local government areas, such as Ku-ring-gai, as to whether it has the capacity or infrastructure or heritage and environment constraints to sustain further densification.

The Federal/ NSW Government's Housing Policy is substandard, chaotic, environmentally irresponsible, and undemocratic. It will dramatically impact Ku-ring-gai's character, heritage, amenity, environment, sustainability, critically endangered species, liveability, carbon budget, and infrastructure in adverse ways.

- It will destroy Ku-ring-gai - the "green lungs" of Sydney - and exacerbate poor air quality and hotter temperatures and make the city of Sydney unliveable. It fails to recognise the role of Ku-ring-gai's canopy trees in keeping Sydney's temperatures cooler. It fails to recognize that the health of Sydney's swimming beaches depends on healthy catchment protection – such as those in Ku-ring-gai.

The Federal/ NSW Government's Housing Policy abandons Federal climate and biodiversity commitments.

- The NSW Government Transport Orientated Development (TOD) aims to reduce carbon emissions by providing multi dwelling housing near railway stations – Roseville, Lindfield, Killara, Gordon. However, this will drive

carbon emissions from demolition of existing houses and extensive land clearing and loss of tree canopy. Concrete is a major carbon emitter.

- There are no controls to reduce energy in multi storey buildings with higher energy demands from lifts, air conditioning, and drying clothes. Nor do the plans implement climate safe energy e.g. reverse cycle air conditioning, heat pumps, insulation and solar panels and community batteries, EV charging stations, composting, food gardens and sufficient deep soil landscaping.
- The NSW Government plans will wipe out Recovery Plans for federally listed endangered ecological communities. In the light of the biodiversity crisis, it is appalling that Ku-ring-gai, a place of such high conservation value, is being rezoned.
- No consideration of Impacts on natural hazards and resilience: No assessment has been made of the potential impacts of climate change and of locating additional population in areas subject to flooding, or bush fire.

Ku-ring-gai's Federally Listed Environmental Values undermined.

- FOKE is working to achieve a UNESCO listed Ku-ring-gai GeoRegion – yet run off from overdevelopment into the national parks that surround it will be exacerbated – shows appalling environmental oversight.
- Reduced landscaping and tree canopy: The changes propose substantial increases in density; for example, permitting far higher floorspace ratios, necessarily resulting in loss of landscaping and tree canopy and further degrading critically federally listed endangered ecological communities (Blue Gum High Forest, Sydney Turpentine Ironbark Forest and Duffy's Forest), biodiversity (Gordon Flying Fox Reserve), bushland and impacts on the surrounding three National Parks.
- Ku-ring-gai should have been Nationally heritage listed as it has the finest collection of 20th domestic architecture in the nation.

Extreme levels of immigration numbers contributing to housing crisis.

- The Leader of the Opposition Mark Speakman has said that the Minns Labor Government needs to work with Federal Labor to reduce the state's record high immigration rates in order to alleviate pressure on the housing market.
- Allowing the NSW Government to pursue its housing policy encourages the Federal Government to maintain unsustainably high levels of immigration.
- Federal Labor needs to wind back their unsustainable levels of immigration to meet current supply.
- Bringing in over 500,000, or even a reduced figure of 250,000 immigrants, creates demand pressures which will take generations of planning, resources and hundreds of billions of infrastructure dollars to satisfy. Supply will always lag demand. The only option is to remove the excess demand by reducing net overseas migration to around 70,000/year. This can be done with the stroke of a pen, with immediate impact and at no cost.

Anti-democratic and Corruption Prone.

- The Minns Housing Plan is antidemocratic removing local government from the planning process. Destroying local democracy at a time when democracy has never been more important.
- Introduction of 'non-refusal standards' for the new planning controls risks corruption. Like the controversial planning provision called Part 3A cultivated under the previous NSW Labor government it was widely criticised, including by ICAC, as creating a "corruption risk" due to the ability of the minister to take wide-ranging decisions to impose developments on communities. More recently there have been reports of money laundering through property.
- The NSW Government is refusing to release the evidence as to why Roseville, Lindfield, Killara and Gordon had the infrastructure capacity to be a TOD. Evidence denied. "Cabinet in confidence".

Will not address housing crisis and affordability.

- Insufficient justification for changes: While the "housing crisis" is acknowledged, no analysis has been provided to Council or residents to justify the detailed changes proposed and no estimates of the additional population likely to result has been provided. (Ku-ring-gai has already experienced a population increase of at least 21% over the last fifteen years). The Government and Department of Planning are refusing to meet with Ku-ring-gai Council and have only allowed a 1-hour Teams Meeting with council staff to discuss the proposals. Councillors were only given a 30 minute briefing with the Department.
- Proposals will exacerbate affordability issues. Some portion of current housing stock is being purchased by wealthy foreign and local investors and left vacant, exacerbating scarcity of available residential properties leading to rental stress and increases and affordability of home ownership across Sydney. Without changes to occupancy use of properties this policy outcome will continue. Minn's policy does not address this problem.
- Housing supply in itself will not resolve the housing shortfall and affordability. "Providing more affordable housing for Sydney is more complex than simply setting targets and building houses. Blaming lack of progress on local councils is similarly simplistic. Removing proper assessment processes and rushing through residential rezonings is guaranteed to create poorly designed and built housing. Speed will not increase affordability. It will, however, result in housing that is isolated, car-dependent, poorly insulated and under-serviced. It is time the state government questioned its creed that "the market" will solve our housing crises. It needs to pay due attention to the inherent complexities of housing a growing population of more than 5 million people." See <https://newsroom.unsw.edu.au/news/general/gutting-greater-cities-commission-nsw-government-setting-failure>
- "The problem of developer's drip-feeding development. The Productivity Commission estimates a 1% increase in overall housing supply (implicitly achievable through planning deregulation) could deflate rents by 2.5%. But what makes this scenario implausible is the development industry's time-honoured – but entirely rational – practice of drip-feeding new housing supply to keep prices buoyant. Even if planning relaxation could enable ramped-up construction, it's hard to imagine that being sustained in the face

of any resulting market cooling.”

See: <https://newsroom.unsw.edu.au/news/social-affairs/market-has-failed-give-australians-affordable-housing-so-don%E2%80%99t-expect-it-solve->

- Roseville, Lindfield, Killara and Gordon have been targeted with additional development under the Transport Oriented Development Programme and will be subject to a new SEPP to allow development of at least 6 storeys with 30% bonuses for affordable housing, commencing April 2024. Allowing affordable housing bonuses of up to 30% for floor space ratio and height, on top of the proposed new controls. The ‘affordable housing’ density bonuses are likely to be used simply as a cover by developers for a yet further increase of 30% in size and density, regardless of the unsuitability of individual sites, and when ‘affordability’ is relative only.
- Philip Oldfield, the head of the University of NSW’s school of built environment, said developers are building apartments primarily for owner-investors, not for people that actually live in the apartments.

Infrastructure Failure.

- Impact on roads, services and infrastructure: The changes take no account of the potential increase in population and impacts on old sewerage infrastructure, traffic, parking and demand for services and facilities; for example, parks, schools, hospitals, swimming pools, libraries and community centres that are required to service new residents, landfill. Water pressure has been lowered over much of Ku-ring-gai with the addition of 16,000 dwellings over the past 15 years. There are no provisions to acquire land to create more parks and playgrounds or purchase environmentally sensitive bushland on private land.

Questions for Paul Fletcher MP at the meeting

Can you ask a question in Parliament?