

# FOKE Talk

## Sydney's High Rise Plan



FOKE recently responded to the Government's SYDNEY PLAN, a 20-year strategy for housing, jobs, infrastructure and growth.

There remains major concern that the Plan's emphasis on development speed and housing delivery compromises comprehensive strategic planning and major infrastructure to support the increasing population.

Other concerns are:

- The Plan's approach to the statewide "one size fits all" policy overrides local variation in character, heritage, infrastructure needs and environmental values of different places.
- Planning should not be reduced to facilitating development. Good planning is not just about building more but shaping cities and suburbs that are liveable, distinct and resilient.
- Planning should recognise heritage as an asset, not an obstacle. Historic homes, streetscapes are part of the fabric of our cities, and irreplaceable once lost.
- Affordable housing is not a short-term product to be produced by market churn. Permanent social and affordable housing available secured

over the long term is needed.

- Reliance on continual changes to the plan, increased flexibility, and fast tracking for development. Speed should not come at the expense of undermining certainty for councils and communities, transparency or proper community consultation.
- Vague reference only to infrastructure. Without an adequate plan for investment for supporting infrastructure schools, parks and community service, growth will be unsustainable.
- Failure to set strong standards for construction standards to assure quality, liveability and good design.
- Inadequate protection of biodiversity, bushland and vulnerable ecological communities. Failure to protect our environment.
- Proposed increased Ministerial Discretion in planning increases risks of lack of accountability, risk of corruption and uncontrolled overdevelopment

To view the FOKE submission:

<https://www.foke.org.au/foke-submission-on-the-sydney-plan/>

### Accountability and Transparency at Risk

The Government Planning System Reforms Act 2025 represents the most significant overhaul of the Environmental Planning and Assessment Act 1979 in a generation. The Development Coordination Authority (DCA) established in December 2025 is one of several key reforms.

The DCA will issue general terms of approval for integrated development and provide statutory and advisory inputs on development applications and rezonings.

The DCA is defined as the Planning Secretary, and its staff will be officers of the Department of Planning, Housing and Infrastructure. This centralisation means independent input that specialised agencies (eg Heritage Council, Rural Fire Service) have historically provided, is replaced with advice from within the planning department itself.

The reforms have been described as contradicting fundamental ICAC principles of accountability, transparency, and oversight.

## PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Dear Members

We hope the New Year has started well for you and your family.

Since January, the committee has been extremely busy lodging submissions in response to new and amended State Significant Developments (SSDs) which now total 32 for approximately 5000+ new dwellings in the form of 8-10 storey high density developments. With the cumulative dwelling component in the 8-10 storey developments being comprised predominantly of family sized apartments, one concern is that none of the multi storey proposals have provisions for suitable or safe play areas for children. We discuss this further in the newsletter and see page 3.

Council is also receiving, via the planning portal, development applications under the provisions of the state government's Low and Mid Rise Housing Policy. This allows 1 or 2 storey dual occupancy, terraces and manor houses and unit buildings 3-6 storeys. We are monitoring and responding to applications as we have time.

Low and Mid-Rise proposals are excluded from Transport Oriented Development (TOD) areas which generally extend 400 metres around Roseville, Lindfield, Killara and Gordon railway stations. Low and Mid-Rise developments are permitted within 800 metres of Pymble, Turramurra, and Wahroonga stations and St Ives Shopping Centre and from the TOD boundary 400metres from the railway entrance up to 800metres out. These developments can benefit from a bonus height and density increase if they provide up to 10% affordable housing.

Whilst 8 of the Ku-ring-gai's 43 Heritage Conservation Areas (HCAs) have been 'saved' from development with the gazettal of the Council's TOD Alternative Scenario, the remaining HCAs across Ku-ring-gai are not protected and can be subject to intrusive low and medium density developments which result in significantly less deep soil for canopy trees, less landscaped areas,

potential impacts on neighbours, and development types out of character with the established area.

In addition, another State Government policy allows Dual Occupancy development across 50% of Ku-ring-gai's R2 or single residential areas provided lot sizes are a minimum 1015m2 with a frontage of 15m.

Over December 2025 – February 2026, the following 6 State Significant Developments were approved :

3-9 Park Avenue Gordon (100 apartments including 31 affordable) approved 19 December 2025; 12-16 Bent Street (111aprtments including 26 affordable of which 3 will be in perpetuity) approved 23 December2025; 2-4 Larkin Street and 1-5 Pockley Street Roseville (111 apartments including 29 affordable) approved 23 February 2026; 17-21 Shirley Road Roseville (56 apartments and 2 affordable ) approved 12 December 2025; 9-21 Beaconsfield Road Lindfield (377 apartments including 56 affordable) approved 13 February 2026; and 3a,3b,5a, 7 Burgoyne and 1&3 Pearson Avenue and 4 Burgoyne Lane Gordon (106 apartments including 4 affordable) approved on 15 December 2025. Another four SSDs are currently progressing to assessment.

For affordable housing the rent amount is determined by the provider and can be calculated in 2 different ways:

1. As a discount of the current market rent, usually set between 75-80% of market price.
2. As a proportion of household income, usually set between 25 and 30% of household income (before tax). You may also be charged 100% of any Commonwealth Rent Assistance (CRA) entitlement if you are eligible.

As well as responding to SSDs, FOKE has made submissions to a number of new State Government Policies including The Sydney Plan, the Development Coordination Authority, and to the NSW Climate Change & Natural Hazards SEPP, Guidelines and Urban Heat Policy. We also responded to a number of Council led matters.

All FOKE's submissions are posted on our website [www.foke.org.au](http://www.foke.org.au)

In other news, we regret to announce

that sadly, two long standing FOKE members recently passed away. Mr Neil Willetts, passed away last month and architect Russell Jack, passed away in August last year at the age of 100 years.

**Please note our AGM this year—on Thursday 28 May—will be at the Roseville Uniting Church.** Unfortunately the Killara Uniting Church Hall is unavailable this year.

Kind regards

*Kathy*

Kathy Cowley  
PRESIDENT



### FOKE AGM

THURSDAY  
28 May 2026

**Roseville Uniting Church  
7a Lord Street, Roseville**

**7.30pm**

Agenda

1. Approval of 2025 AGM Minutes
2. President's Report 2026
3. Election of Officers

*Join us for supper  
following the meeting*

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

*Established 1994*

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## NSW GOVT FAILING CHILDREN



FOKE, in its submissions objecting to the NSW Government's ad hoc spot rezoning, high density State Significant Developments (SSDs) in Ku-ring-gai Transport Oriented Development (TOD) zones, has identified yet another serious failing. Not only do they fail affordability, environmental sustainability, infrastructure, livability and heritage protection - they fail children.

FOKE has identified serious deficiencies in NSW Government's commitment to providing child-friendly apartment homes. They demonstrate ignorance for how children live, play and grow.

The SSD proposals that FOKE has examined and made submissions on do not provide adequate access to natural light, fresh air and ventilation and sufficient space to play—essential for children's health and wellbeing.

The child-unfriendly designs fail to properly consider the indoor and communal open space play needs for children.

Children need safe places where they can play with peers, interact with neighbours and experience community life. Such spaces support physical activity, social interaction and mental wellbeing.

Family-friendly high-density living also requires access to green and natural spaces within easy walking distance. Yet the SSD proposals provide little meaningful access to nature. Gardens and green landscaping appear sterile and poorly designed, limiting opportunities for children to explore and play.

Children's play areas should be visible from apartments and supported by open, welcoming building layouts.

If apartment living is to become the norm for more families, develop-

## FOKE Talks to Local MPs:



FOKE has had regular meetings with Matt Cross, Member for Davidson, since 2023 when the Transport Oriented Development was first introduced.

FOKE has expressed its disappointment that the Liberal Party supported changes to the environment and planning legislation and that the Liberal Party has demonstrated a troubling alignment with NSW Labor planning policies.

In Matt Cross' January 2026 Summer Edition it was pleasing to note his acknowledgment that Ku-ring-gai is the "lungs of Sydney", due to its unique tree canopy whilst recognizing that this will be put to the test with more than 24,000 new TOD dwellings expected. It is pleasing that he has called on the Minister of Planning to review measures to prevent illegal tree removal and will announce the outcome of the review shortly.

**Matt Cross and NSW Shadow Planning Minister Chris Rath have agreed to take a FOKE tour of the Ku-ring-gai TOD in April 2026.**



FOKE met with Nicolette Boele MP's Community Policy & Engagement Officer Gillian Bennett in early February 2026, to discuss community concerns about the Transport Oriented Development (TOD); Low and Mid-Rise (LMR) housing policies; the growing number of State Significant Developments (SSDs) and their cumulative impact on Ku-ring-gai's heritage, tree canopy and threatened ecological communities — including Critically Endangered Blue Gum High Forest and Sydney Turpentine Ironbark Forest.

FOKE expressed alarm at the scale, pace, process and sheer number of the SSDs currently proposed across the LGA. The SSD public exhibition has also been reduced from 28 to 14 days with little transparency on how objections are assessed.

FOKE hopes that the new Federal EPBC Act will protect Ku-ring-gai's unique natural environment with habitats for endangered wildlife including the Powerful Owl and Flying Fox.

**Nicolette Boele's Office is currently mapping the SSDs across the electorate to better understand their cumulative impact.**

## Join FOKE Now! [www.foke.org.au](http://www.foke.org.au)

ments must ensure that children have safe homes, access to nature and shared spaces that support healthy growth and community life.

Noise from children playing on private terraces or in communal areas can lead to complaints from neighbours and discourage the use of shared spaces. Developments should therefore include buffer zones between "noisy"

and "quiet" activity areas.

The failure to incorporate child-friendly design places additional pressure on parents and may lead to conflicts with neighbours and strata management. State Government policies must be amended to ensure that children have safe, healthy and accessible communal play spaces in multi-storey developments.

## Tree Vandalism



Photo: Tree Vandalism in St Ives

Tree vandalism in Sydney's northern suburbs is prompting real concern.

Current planning policies are driving major tree loss in northern suburbs, and illegal removal is accelerating canopy decline.

Offenders can incur council fines, and serious offences can attract court-imposed fines of up to \$1.1 million.

Tree vandalism includes destruction, damage, excessive pruning, or removal of trees on public or private land without approval.

Trees help clean air, stabilise soil, provide shade, reduce urban heat, support wildlife habitat and canopy corridors and beautify suburbs.

Residents are urged to report tree vandalism promptly.

First check council's tree map viewer to see whether a permit was issued for the address:

<https://experience.arcgis.com/experience/4bcccb15de044e2fa1c76a09b470d3aa?org=krgnsw>

**If the matter is urgent, call the 24/7 Tree Hotline on 9424 0400.**

For non-urgent cases, submit an online report or email with photos of loppers' registration and other details to [krg@krg.nsw.gov.au](mailto:krg@krg.nsw.gov.au)

## NATIONAL TRUST AUSTRALIAN HERITAGE FESTIVAL



### Remembering the Battles to Save Gordon Station



Saving Gordon's Station's heritage was a huge battle in 2004.

Join this walk and hear about why this campaign was so important to the Ku-ring-gai community groups including FOKE and the Ku-ring-gai Historical Society.

This walk will honour the extraordinary commitment of the late Jennifer Harvey (1946-2024), historian, who was deeply committed to protecting Gordon Railway Station as well as Ku-ring-gai's outstanding local and State heritage listed items and Ku-ring-gai's Heritage Conservation Areas.

On this walking tour you will be amazed at how much of this site tells the story of Australia's conservation history that involves National Trust (NSW) founder Annie Wyatt and other generations of "tree lovers" who continue to call for stronger protections for Ku-ring-gai's unique heritage and environment.

**When: Sunday 3 May 2026**

**When: 9.45am-12 noon**

**Meet:** Gordon Railway Station Ticket Office on Overhead Bridge, near WWI Memorial Plaque

**Bring:** Water, Snack, Umbrella (if it rains)

**Book:** <https://events.humanitix.com/remembering-the-battles-to-save-gordon-station?>

What is so significant about the State Heritage listing of Gordon Station is the NSW Government's acknowledgment of a community who deeply respect their heritage.

#### **State Heritage Register Criteria d) Social Significance:**

*Gordon Railway Station has social significance as evidenced by the community involvement during the design and construction of the new lifts and access arrangements. Local historical societies are also known to include the station complex in historical tours of the local area, thereby demonstrating the high esteem held by particular members of the community for the Gordon Station.*

The battle to save Ku-ring-gai's heritage continues.

## Australia Day AWARD



Congratulations to Jill Green, President of STEP, who has been awarded Ku-ring-gai Council's Australia Day Environmental Citizen of the Year.

Jill has provided 14 years of dedicated leadership to STEP, a community-based environmental organisation with around 500 members committed to conserving our local bushland. Through her tireless efforts, she has built strong, and respectful connections with local councils and environmental groups across the region.

Beyond her role at STEP, Jill is an active member of the Friends of Lane Cove National Park, the Ku-ring-gai Bushcare Association, the Ku-ring-gai Council's Environment Advisory Committee, the Powerful Owl Coalition, and the Natural Turf Alliance. She also volunteers on four bushcare sites and participates in the Streamwatch Program at Quarry Creek.

Through her research, writing, and networking skills, Jill has made an extraordinary contribution to protecting native flora and fauna in our region, and inspiring us all to care for the environment we share.