



PRESIDENT'S REPORT

26 MAY 2021

In expanding housing stock to meet future needs, the 2020 Strategy needs to recognise and address the changing size and profile of the state's population. In doing so, it will need to set out population and household projections more fully than in the Discussion Paper. In the light of the COVID-19 impact on international migration, this analysis will need to incorporate scenarios that allow for the possibility that future flows will be lower than previously forecast. City Futures Blog, 'NSW Housing Strategy: challenges to be faced, objectives to be owned', UNSW Australia

2020 will be a year that we will never forget!

We are all living in unprecedented times following the outbreak early in the year of the world wide pandemic COVID-19. Not only have we had to adjust our daily activities and family life to manage the impacts of the pandemic but also how we manage our communication and the way we carried out FOKE business.

Whilst the virus restrictions were slowly being lifted so more normal life could resume, there were issues that the community and other organisations such as FOKE needed to take into consideration. For instance, as a result of the cancellation of the May 2020 AGM due to lockdown restrictions, it was necessary for the Committee to receive a six-month extension from the Department of Fair Trading to lawfully comply.

We also discovered the implications and restrictions in holding regular committee meetings. FOKE's Constitution did not permit the committee to use electronic means to conduct its business so our meetings, whilst being conducted by ZOOM, could not be ratified until we were able to meet again in person. This prompted the updating and amending of our Constitution to include electronic means of conducting and formalising FOKE business. At the AGM on 16 September, we asked members to adopt some new clauses to our Constitution to allow for those amendments. The constitutional amendments reflected similar 'model constitution' changes from the Department of Fair Trading. Please refer to the current FOKE Constitution adopted in September which is posted on the FOKE website at www.foke.org.au/about

The rescheduled AGM of 16 September 2020 was held in our usual venue, Killara Uniting Church Hall, with just four members attending in addition to the nine members of the Committee, so a gathering well within the health restrictions required by the NSW

Government to keep people safe during the pandemic. Some of those health restrictions are still in place and life has certainly changed.

More than a year on and the pandemic is still raging across the world with the release of several vaccines only starting to make an impact on the ability of the world to get life back to some normality.... if it ever does.

Despite the health restrictions, 2020 ended up being a very productive and busy year for FOKE in responding to a string of NSW government and council planning changes.

• **FOKE'S SUBMISSIONS - GOVERNMENT POLICIES AND PLANS**

FOKE made several submissions over the past year in relation to public exhibitions of policies and plans by the State Government, Ku-ring-gai Council, and the Greater Sydney Commission. FOKE's submissions will be added to our website this year.

Listed below are the local and state government submissions FOKE made in 2020.

- Draft Ku-ring-gai Housing Strategy and Delivery Plan
- COVID-19 Legislation Amendment Bill
- Draft Ku-ring-gai Heritage Strategy
- Draft Ku-ring-gai Local Character Statement
- Roseville Memorial Club Development Application and Voluntary Planning Agreement
- Proposal to Synthetic Turf Norman Griffith Oval
- NSW Independent Inquiry into the 2019-2020 Bushfire Season
- NSW Housing Strategy Discussion Paper
- Federal Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation (EPBC) Act Review
- Draft Ku-ring-gai Strategic Planning Statement
- Rural Fire Service Clearing Code

Draft Ku-ring-gai Housing Strategy submission

The NSW Government required all Councils to prepare a local housing strategy to deliver additional housing to accommodate the expected growth of Greater Sydney over the next 20 years.

By 2036, the Government's projected population increase for Ku-ring-gai is more than 25,000. The profile of our local residents is also expected to change, with an increasingly ageing population, smaller family groups, proportionally fewer young adults and more single people.

Under the direction of the Greater Sydney Commission and the NSW Department of Planning, the Draft Housing Strategy was developed by Ku-ring-gai Council during 2019-2020 with an extended period of community consultation. The intent of the strategy was to consider how Ku-ring-gai would provide additional housing and housing choice to the year 2036.

FOKE had many concerns regarding the proposal, with the key ones highlighted below:

- The plan was not backed up by baseline studies, as conducted in 2002, in the areas of environment, infrastructure, traffic and parking, social needs and heritage.
- The plan did not assess the cumulative impact of the past 15 years of development. The Ku-ring-gai Local Strategic Planning Statement 2020(LSPS) acknowledges that most of this growth has occurred primarily in Lindfield, Killara, Gordon and St Ives. And again further growth is focused in these local centres. These town centres should not be expected to take 100% of the proposed increase in new dwellings.
- This growth plan is not ecologically sustainable and these population growth numbers, of 41% over 30 years, will have huge negative impacts on our environment, heritage, biodiversity and amenity.
- No new zoning of medium to high density should occur until existing capacity is utilised. This would defer any amendments to after 2026.
- New infrastructure projects continue to lag behind existing growth in dwellings and current infrastructure cannot support further growth, including school capacity, traffic congestion, recreation, community services and parks and open spaces.
- There was no commitment to numbers or targets for the delivery of parks and community facilities in the areas of greatest growth. Council has only delivered pocket parks and one major new facility in the last decade e.g. Fitness & Aquatic Centre at West Pymble
- The plan did not lock in or plan to deliver any new infrastructure or its funding.
- The draft strategy was solely based on capacity and financial viability studies to assure delivery of new housing.
- High density zoning up to a radius of 800 metres to increase medium and high density development was unacceptable as most of the heritage and threatened natural environment is concentrated along the Pacific Highway and St Ives ridgeline.
- Medium density up to a radius of 400 metres around neighbourhood centres was unacceptable and should be curtailed to half this.
- There was no guarantee that Ku-ring-gai's biodiversity will be protected, or that the conservation of Ku-ring-gai's character can be achieved.
- Concentrating high density development in and around threatened ecological communities, such as the critically endangered Blue Gum High Forest and Sydney Turpentine Forest areas was unacceptable.
- Though mentioned as an important objective, there was no guarantee or process to ensure that developers will build to high standards of construction and design excellence and that the range of housing built will be diverse.
- There were no guarantees that the strategy would ensure the delivery of affordable housing.
- No medium density should be made complying development as it does not allow for input or negotiation from neighbours to the development proposals.

- There were no guarantees that medium and high-density development would not further impact heritage conservation areas and heritage items.

The public exhibition for the Draft Ku-ring-gai Housing Strategy closed on 8 May 2020. A report on the Draft Strategy including public feedback, was presented to the 18 July 2020 Council meeting. Council voted to defer the Housing Strategy for two months to seek advice from the NSW Premier and the NSW Department of Planning, Industry & Environment on proposed housing targets for Ku-ring-gai, as well as to further consider community feedback following a letter from the Minister for Planning.

The Draft Housing Strategy received much criticism particularly in written submissions from State Representatives, The Hon Jonathan O’Dea MP and Mr Alister Henkens SC MP. There were 253 public submissions in all, with most critical in some part of the Draft Strategy.

At the 22 September meeting, Council initially voted to adopt the recommendations of a Mayoral Minute concerning Ku-ring-gai’s Draft Housing Strategy. But minutes before the conclusion of the meeting, a rescission motion was lodged by five of the Councillors which meant that this decision could be overturned.

The Council next considered the matter at its meeting on Tuesday 22 October. The Council voted at this meeting not to proceed with increased heights or new zonings, and adopt a housing strategy that would provide new housing to the year 2036 from existing capacity within Ku-ring-gai’s current planning controls.

The Draft Ku-ring-gai Housing Strategy was amended in accordance with the Council resolution of 22 September 2020 and was submitted to the Department of Planning, Industry and Environment on Monday 14 December 2020 for review and approval.

FOKE made several recommendations to council following the release of the officer’s report on the public submissions, the key points being:

1. Amend the targeted dwelling numbers to 8,677 to align with the population growth, as supported by the DPIE forecasts. The proposed 41% population increase and 10,660 dwellings increase from 2006 to 2036 is ecologically unsustainable. Previous baseline studies in 2002 warned of adverse impacts to the environment, heritage and public infrastructure with increasing Ku-ring-gai’s population by 10%!
2. No changes to current height and FSR controls until baseline studies are completed for not just the Local Character, but also covering heritage areas, environment, traffic, parking and infrastructure needs.
3. There is no need to change current zoning and planning controls as the new dwellings can be substantially met by existing controls.
4. No changes to existing controls and zoning until infrastructure is fully funded and approved for delivery to support the earlier population and proposed future population increases.
7. The Ku-ring-gai Housing Strategy needs to be amended to add significant curtilage protections for heritage, biodiversity and visual landscape.

8. Modify the current complying Low Rise Medium Density code to better protect Ku-ring-gai's unique assets and reduce impact on already stressed infrastructure.
9. For Council to ensure that the existing capacity under current LEPs is taken up, offering more options will only extend the town centre and increase heights for no community gain, except for the profitability of the developer.

Thankfully Council rejected the recommended Draft Housing Strategy and proceeded with the maintenance of current zoning and current controls to meet our housing requirements, with the Mayor utilising her deciding vote to ensure the Draft Strategy was rejected.

In the past FOKE has seen Ku-ring-gai's housing targets overachieved due to aggressive development amid changes to controls. However, at each five-year review, this excess housing supply is once again ignored as a new target is set.

With the NSW Government Draft Housing Strategy process occurring during a pandemic with population experts forecasting that population growth would severely reduce due to a combination of border closures and a natural reduction in birth rate at a time of stress, this continuing push for more developer driven housing is irresponsible.

Draft Heritage Strategy submission

The FOKE submission supported the draft study's recommendations:

1. To support as a priority the fulfilling of obligations to conserve Ku-ring-gai's heritage.
2. To support the priority that council continues to use and draw on previous consultant's heritage studies.
3. To support as a priority the conservation and protection of significant mid-late 20th Century development.
4. To support the priority to review existing and identify new heritage items and HCAs.
5. To support the priority to review and refine existing DCPs and LEPs to ensure heritage items are not unduly impacted by unsympathetic or inappropriate development.
6. To support the priority to focus on areas that interface heritage items and HCAs given the potential for conflicting and unsympathetic development to potentially degrade heritage items.
7. To ensure continued and regular engagement with the Ku-ring-gai Historical Society.
8. To continue to promote and facilitate Heritage Home Grants.
9. To maintain heritage profile in Ku-ring-gai Design awards.
10. To continue to promote heritage in the wider community.
11. To participate in the annual National Trust Heritage Festival.
12. To support the priority to make interim heritage orders where appropriate.
13. To continue to support the priority to identify and correct heritage anomalies.
14. To continue to support owners of heritage properties in Ku-ring-gai.

Ku-ring-gai Local Character Statements (KLCS) submission

In late 2020 Council sought feedback on the introduction of Local Character Area statements. Again these Local Character Statements are intended as a guide as to where additional housing can be developed within Ku-ring-gai.

The 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 Turrumurra to south Wahroonga), West Pymble, Lower West (West Lindfield), Heritage Core (Roseville to Gordon) and North Turrumurra 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 away from agriculture, is lost. The rationale of how each suburb has grown over the past 150 years is essential to its character.

The KLCS is, ultimately, a simplistic and superficial, one-size-fits-all approach to identifying Ku-ring-gai's local character and ignores key heritage areas identified in council studies. The KLCS sanitises and downgrades, and ultimately threatens, Ku-ring-gai's thoroughly researched and documented local character through many years of consultant's studies such as the Godden Mackay Logan Neighbourhood and Character Study of 2000, which is still relevant today, as well as the M A Schell Study of 1999.

If adopted, the KLCS in the way it is being currently devised will facilitate further indiscriminate re-zonings for increased high-rise development and other forms of overdevelopment while weakening protection for Ku-ring-gai's heritage and documented character areas, heritage items, and streetscapes.

This Kur-ring-gai Local Character Statement process will continue into 2021.

● 'KU-RING-GAI CHASE' GEOPARK UNESCO LISTING

In 2019 Friends of Ku-ring-gai Environment (FOKE) resolved to commence a campaign to call for the World Heritage listing of Ku-ring-gai Chase National Park (KCNP).

Over 2020, the FOKE sub-committee has expanded to include FOKE member Angus M Robinson, representing the Australian Geoscience Council, Dr John Martyn, geologist, celebrated natural heritage author and STEP member and a number of other experts on the geology, flora and fauna of Ku-ring-Gai Chase National Park (KCNP).

The goal has now been clarified to firstly identify a major GeoRegion offering the potential of being nominated as an Aspiring UNESCO Global Geopark subject to State Government approval and community support, commencing with the establishment of a series of geotrails, as one of the listing pre-requisites. We have also expanded the boundaries of the identified GeoRegion east to the northern beaches and west to the Berowra River and Hornsby Quarry in order to include a number of nationally and internationally significant geoheritage sites.

The establishment of this GeoRegion aims to build on the existing recognised values of the area, its biodiversity, natural and Aboriginal cultural heritage, and highlight its foundation of nationally and internationally significant geology and geomorphology that has resulted in the development of these unique traits. The plan is to re-invigorate and highlight the area's importance with the unifying aspects of a GeoRegion through the establishment of geosites and geotrails linking the various features and aspects of the area.

Having prepared the materials, research and analysis in our evaluation of the area as a defined GeoRegion in Stage 1, we are now embarking on Stage 2, which focuses on gaining support for our ultimate objective from local MPs, National Parks and Wildlife Service, Mayors, Aboriginal groups, the community and other stakeholders.

● NATIONAL TRUST HERITAGE FESTIVAL

Due to the pandemic and nation-wide health restrictions, no FOKE events organised like those conducted in the past few years were organised for the 2020 National Trust Heritage Festival. However, we have planned an event for the forthcoming 2021 National Trust Heritage Festival the "History of Tree Lovers" Walk to celebrate the life of Annie Wyatt and the Tree Lovers League on Sunday 16 May during the 2021 National Trust Festival.

● THE BETTER PLANNING NETWORK NSW (BPN)

BPN continues to lobby on behalf of its member groups (FOKE being a founding member) in response to State Government planning policies.

Some of the submissions BPN submitted on behalf of the membership were:

1. The Cumberland Plain Conservation Plan
2. Greener Spaces Design Guide
3. Housing Diversity SEPP Explanation of Intended Effects (EoIE)
4. Productivity Commission Review of Infrastructure Contributions in NSW
5. State Strategic Plan for Crown Land
6. Minister Robert Stokes intervention in Ku-ring-gai's Draft Housing Strategy. At the time BPN wrote to all members advising:

*"Planning and Public Spaces Minister Rob Stokes wrote a nice letter to Ku-ring-gai Council on 8 September 2020 advising them that *The Members of Parliament representing your local area have been correct to identify that the target discussed with the Greater Sydney Commission is not a legal requirement upon Council by the Government.* Minister Stokes letter continued *Council is responsible for deciding the number of dwellings in its local housing supply target and how it is accommodated within the local government area and that Council should carefully consider whether the housing target determined with the GSC accords with the expectations of the community.**

The developers and equity financiers lobby group, Urban Taskforce Australia, obtained a copy of that letter and days later they wrote to the Planning Minister telling him *It's not too late for you, Minister, to re-assert the need for population growth spread fairly across all Councils. It now appears, through the letter that has been sent (by the Minister to Ku-ring-gai Council), that you have simply let them off the hook,* Urban Taskforce CEO Tom Forrest

told Minister Stokes. Urban Taskforce is worried about *the precedent it could set moving forward*. Minister Stokes took the Urban Taskforce advice and the result was the Minister's warning to ALL COUNCILS on 23 September 2020 that *if councils don't want to lead planning for growth at a local level, it will simply mean the Government will need to take more direction*. An abrupt change of heart from the Minister?

BPN does not think that a developers and equity financiers lobby group should be advising any Minister on how to conduct their portfolio. Urban Taskforce has previously made it clear just what is happening within the planning system, saying *It is no-wonder that the NSW Treasury has been the agency driving planning reform in NSW*. BPN certainly does not think that is how any planning system should be run. Planning should be the remit of the Planning Minister not any other Minister, not even the Treasurer. No Council, and particularly Ku-ring-gai residents, should allow the character of their suburbs to be irrevocably destroyed by increasingly emboldened developers and their lobbyists.

We encourage everyone, particularly Ku-ring-gai residents, to write to their Members of Parliament expressing their concern at this unprecedented attack on their local council's right to decide *the number of dwellings in its local housing supply target* and on the character of their suburbs.”

● FOKE WEBSITE AND FACEBOOK

FOKE's webmaster Ursula Bonzol continues to update the FOKE website with the assistance of a local web developer. The web address remains www.foke.org.au FOKE is most grateful for the time-consuming work Ursula carries out throughout the year particularly in uploading newsletters and articles and in addressing technical problems with the website.

FOKE's Facebook continues to be updated on an almost daily basis and we encourage our members to like the pages and to comment on the topics presented which may be of interest.

● FOKE'S STUDENT PRIZES

Macquarie University Prize

Rianna Santos was the worthy 2020 recipient of the academic prize to be awarded to a final year student in recognition of academic excellence in Environmental Studies who completed the undergraduate course of a Bachelor of Science, majoring in Environmental Earth Science.

Our aim in giving the award is to promote the importance and value of conservation of the environment and nature. FOKE wants to encourage students to become involved in their local area with regard to environmental issues.

FOKE's commitment to fund the academic prize was for three years. We have decided to advise Macquarie University that we will not be renewing the Award next year.

Jan Langley Sustainability Award – East Lindfield Public School

East Lindfield Public School Year 6 student Drishti was presented with the prize for her work towards sustainability. Due to COVID-19 health restrictions there was no

representative from FOKE or the Langley family in attendance. The school kindly provided a photo of the recipient for FOKE's records.

Jean Posen Environment Award – Lindfield Public School

The 2020 award was presented to Annabelle Jones in recognition for her passion for caring for the environment and improving sustainability practices in her school. Due to NSW health restrictions, there was no representative from FOKE in attendance.

●FOKE COMMITTEE

Without the assistance and support of Ursula Bonzol, Carolyn Darby, Janet Harwood, Denise Hendy, Janine Kitson, Katrina Pickles, Dinah Warner and Tanya Wood the FOKE committee would not be as productive or active. My sincere thanks for the valued and important contribution each has made to the organisation and day-to-day workings of FOKE. Meeting via ZOOM was a whole new experience for us all and certainly not the same as meeting regularly in my home where we carry out the business over a cup of tea and freshly baked cake!

Jill Johnstone continues to kindly assist FOKE behind the scenes maintaining and updating FOKE's membership lists and printing the address labels for postage each year. Without Jill's wonderful assistance FOKE would not be as efficient.

Thank you to Ursula Bonzol and Janine Kitson who continue to collect, organise, write and edit the articles for the newsletter *FOKE Talk*. We hope members are finding the information in the newsletters interesting and relevant.

With the Council switching to a COVID-safe electronic meeting "venue" and submissions to the Public Forum to be emailed by 5 p.m. a week prior to each Tuesday night Council meeting, Carolyn Darby did not have to make trips to the Council Chamber to gather information from Council meetings and the monthly Ku-ring-gai Local Planning Panel (KLPP) sittings for her reports to the FOKE Committee. We are very grateful for Carolyn's excellent reporting following these meetings.

The recordings of these meetings are available on live-stream at <https://www.krg.nsw.gov.au/Council/Council-meetings/Council-meeting-recordings-2021>

●REMEMBERING

Jack Munday AO

We were saddened to learn of the passing of prominent conservationist, environmentalist and union leader Dr Jack Munday, AO and FOKE wrote to his wife Judy expressing our sympathy and sincere condolences.

Anne Carroll and I looked to Jack for inspiration and guidance when FOKE was first formed and enjoyed an afternoon tea with him in his home in 1995 talking about his activism and work to Save the Rocks. He was a mentor and supporter to so many community groups who are fighting to save their heritage and environment. FOKE received a letter of support from

Jack Munday in 2009 when Ku-ring-gai Council's planning powers were taken over by Planning Minister Frank Sartor. He wrote, *Successive State Governments have treated Ku-ring-gai people with contempt. Until an elected Council assumes control of the Planning process, abuse of planning powers will continue.*

Judy Munday sent a letter in reply in November, writing:

Dear Kathy

Thank you so much for your card & very kind words on behalf of Friends of Ku-ring-gai Environment Inc. on the loss of Jack. I am very sad & life is very different after 55 years with Jack, but it is heartening & comforting to receive messages such as yours praising his contribution & acknowledging his assistance or advice when you were in the process of forming and establishing your very fine organisation. It was just the sort of organisation, an active community, or resident action group, that led to the creation of the Green Bans when the Battlers for Kelly's Bush approached the Builders Labourers Union, of which Jack was Secretary, seeking help to save some urban bushland. Things moved quickly after the success of the Union's intervention. I'm sure Jack would have been pleased to give you whatever advice he could when you approached him. Unfortunately such groups as yours are still needed as much as ever. It seems a never ending battle to preserve heritage & the environment.

Thank you again for your kind message.

*Warm regards
Judy Munday*

Phillip Langley Memorial Tree Planting.

The committee thanks Council, and particularly Chris Houghton, for supporting our request to have a memorial tree planted in memory of member and outstanding community volunteer the late Phillip Langley. With members of his family present, a number of community representatives, council staff and Councillor Cheryl Szatow were there to commemorate and plant the tree. The Angophora Costata was planted in the Gordon Recreational Park in November, a place where Phillip spent time playing tennis over many years. The park lost a number of trees with the devastating storm that impacted several Ku-ring-gai suburbs last year.

Dr Barbara Walker member of FOKE

FOKE member and community volunteer Dr Barbara Walker passed away on 27 January 2020. Barbara was particularly known for her contribution and work in the Roseville area.

Mayor Jennifer Anderson recently proposed a Mayoral Minute to honour her life and community work, stating:

Since moving to Ku-ring-gai in 1994 Barbara embraced her garden together with the heritage and ambiance values of Roseville, and other parts of Ku-ring-gai. Joining with other passionate Roseville residents, she helped form The Archbold Estate Roseville Incorporated and worked consistently over many years to achieve the Heritage Conservation

Area status. This involved many presentations to Council, contributions to the Council Heritage Committee and consultation on many development proposals and zoning studies. The informative plaque at Firs Cottage, Clanville Park and the Roseville railway station “roll-over boards” in Sous le Soleil (within Firs Cottage) are other examples of the Archbold Estate contributions to the area.

The legacy of Barbara’s many interests and achievements will be gratefully remembered by many and Council will certainly miss the important advocacy role she undertook for the Ku-ring-gai community.

It was a privilege to know Barbara, to share her passion, knowledge and dedication for Roseville and to witness her tireless commitment to protecting its values and cherished character. We thank you for your life of service that has enriched our community. Our sincere condolences to Bruce, Alice and Cameron on the sad loss of their wife and mother and to her many friends across Ku-ring-gai who will miss her dearly.

FOKE will always remember Barbara for her passion and dedication to heritage and her work with the Archbold Estate in the protection and care of Roseville.

•FOKE MEMBERSHIP

We thank our members for their membership renewal this year. With the cost of public liability insurance, postage, printing and maintaining key organisation memberships with the Better Planning Network and NSW Nature Conservation Council, FOKE’s running costs continue to mount, so it is always so helpful and encouraging to receive donations from members. Due to increasing costs of postage and printing we have made the decision to send membership notifications by email.

If you prefer to receive information by mail, please notify us by email, at info@foke.org.au, or write to FOKE at PO Box 403, Killara NSW 2071.

•IN CLOSING

We wish all our members a safe and healthy year ahead and look forward to welcoming you to a less restrictive 27th AGM and Public Meeting in 2022.

Kathy Cowley

PRESIDENT
May 2021



Councillor Cheryl Szatow at the Philip Langley Memorial Tree Planting



Sydney lord mayor Clover Moore and environmental activist Jack Munday