

FOKE Talk

Protecting & Enhancing Ku-ring-gai's Character

Following on from 2020's exhibition on Ku-ring-gai's Local Character Study, we now have the next iteration of these Broad Local Character statements for review.

In January, FOKE also made a submission to NSW Planning regarding its Local Character Overlay policy. This has provided us with further clarification of this policy approach.

Although FOKE welcomes any planning initiative to protect Ku-ring-gai's Local Character, FOKE remains concerned that the Local Character Statements and Local Character Overlays obscure contrary objectives of increasing medium density development via the new 'Low Rise Housing Diversity Code' (LRHDC). This would continue to decimate Ku-ring-gai's character, heritage and environment, if allowed.

It is apparent that the underlying objective is not preserving local character, but increases in population density. This is assumed as the starting point and cornerstone of this Local Character approach to planning, rather than adopting a more balanced approach.

In drilling down on the objectives of this planning direction, there is regular reference to promoting more medium density development via the LRHDC. This code has been roundly criticised by councils as potentially destroying vast areas of established Local Character.

In order to seek an exemption from the LRHDC in a Local Character Area, a Council would "need to demonstrate that without complying development, the housing needs can still be effectively met."



And this is at a time when we are seeing a massive drop in population growth in Sydney that will impact housing requirements for years to come.

The approach for these Broad Local Character Areas (BLCA) is to firstly define Ku-ring-gai's physical characteristics. This first stage will not examine the social and cultural characteristics of our areas, which include many of the key elements of Ku-ring-gai's core character, our cultural heritage and development.

We agree the need for Local Character Statements in protecting existing Local Character is essential for Ku-ring-gai.

As the Ku-ring-gai Housing Strategy approved by Council in 2020 has not yet been approved by NSW Planning, areas for 'change' or 'desired future character', essentially meaning rezoning, are not being actively sought in this process.

So what to do: Participate in the Ku-ring-gai Local Character

Study which is now on public exhibition until Monday 26th April. The link is <https://www.krg.nsw.gov.au/Council/Your-say/Ku-ring-gai-Local-Character-Background-Study>

The video clearly outlines the detail of the approach. You can respond via the online survey or make a submission. The updated character statements focus on the physical characteristics of the area.

FOKE's view is that by segmenting the approach to these statements into physical character first, and then later the social and cultural character, will undermine the value of our heritage conservation areas (HCAs) and heritage values across our suburbs.

An essential feature of HCAs and character areas is their relationship with historic subdivision patterns and history. Severing that relationship diminishes and degrades the significance of Ku-ring-gai's history and heritage, and so endangers the protection of its built and natural environment, and essentially degrades the local character.

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Dear Members

A belated Happy New Year to you and your families. I hope that your Christmas and New Year holiday period was peaceful and enjoyable.

We enter 2021 with new hope that life will progressively resume to a more normal level now that the approved vaccines are starting to be distributed. Understanding that this will still take most of this year to complete. It is our hope to have face to face committee meetings this year following last year's ZOOM meetings along with our May AGM arrangements. However, we will not be holding any public meeting until full vaccination is complete in order to ensure the safety of our members and the public.

In January we lodged a submission to the State Government on the Department of Planning's Local Character Statement and Character Overlay policy. While on face value this new policy of the State Government has some merit in the desire to protect local character, FOKE has a concern that this may turn out to be a 'double edged sword' for councils. Particularly as the government is simultaneously pushing for the introduction of their medium density complying Development Code, renamed the Low Rise Housing Diversity Code (LRHDC), into low density residential areas across Metropolitan Sydney.

It appears that the Department of Planning will be the final arbiter of whether or not councils have correctly classified their character areas as suitable to be 'changed', 'enhanced' or

'maintained'. The Department can and will override a council's decisions if it determines that character statements or the overlay is too overprotective in preventing LRHDC development.

It is important that we continue to fight to retain the character and amenity of our area for the future. Particularly, as it is unlikely that the pressure for additional dwellings will ever cease in Sydney.

As we stated in our December Newsletter we hope to now send out all communications by email due to the high cost of postage and printing. We asked that if you would still like to receive the correspondence by post that we will be happy to continue to do so, however you will need to contact us at info@foke.org.au so that you will remain on the mailing list.

We are attaching the FOKE Renewal Notice for membership for 2021. We thank you for your continuing membership and support for the work that the FOKE Committee carries out on behalf of our members. We anticipate that it will be a very busy year for FOKE in responding to State Government and Ku-ring-gai Council policies and plans.

Please do not hesitate to contact us if you would like us to raise particular matters with Council or the State Government in relation to matters FOKE advocates.

Wishing you a happy, fulfilling and healthy 2021.

Kind regards

Kathy Cowley

President

ADVANCE NOTICE FOKE Annual General Meeting

The FOKE AGM will be
Wednesday 26 May 2021
Killara Uniting Church
Hall
Cnr Arnold Street &
Karranga Avenue, Killara
7.30 pm

For the safety of our members there will be no Public Meeting this year, or until the Covid-19 vaccination program is completed.

Join FOKE Now!

www.foke.org.au

**FRIENDS OF
KU-RING-GAI
ENVIRONMENT INC.**
Established 1994
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President: Kathy Cowley
Vice-President: Janine Kitson
Treasurer: Tanya Wood
Minutes Secretary:

Katrina Pickles

Committee:

Ursula Bonzol

Carolyn Darby

Janet Harwood

Denise Hendy

Dinah Warner

Tanya Wood

Facebook:

Friendsokuringgai



National Environment Laws fail to protect Ku-ring-gai's Biodiversity



Ku-ring-gai has long been recognised as a place of national significance - a place that needs the strongest of environmental protections.

It is thus with great disappointment that the Federal Government has ignored and dismissed the findings of the final report on the review of the federal *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act* (EPBC Act). Professor Graeme Samuel, who was commissioned to do the review, handed it to Environment Minister Sussan Ley, in January, 2021.

Professor Graeme Samuel's EPBC Act Review was scathing, saying it 'is not fit for current and future environmental challenges'. He recommended that the EPBC needed a complete overhaul because it failed to achieve its objectives and stated: *Australia's natural environment and iconic places are in an overall state of decline and are under increasing threat. The environment is not sufficiently resilient to withstand current, emerging or future threats, including climate change. The environmental trajectory is currently unsustainable. The EPBC Act does not clearly outline its intended outcomes, and the environment has suffered from two decades of failing to continuously improve the law and its implementation.*

The Review reinforces what FOKE has argued for some time - that the cumulative environmental damages of past developments must be considered when approving a development.

The Review calls for the removal of exemptions for the logging industry from the EPBC Act, which were created under Regional Forestry Agreements between state and federal governments - and is why koala habitats have been allowed to be logged.

Despite this the Federal Government has already devolved some environmental powers to states and territories and implemented other legislation to boost the economy by cutting 'green tape'.

The Australian Conservation Foundation nature program manager Basha Stasak said "In the 20 years since the EPBC Act was introduced, it has failed to protect Australia's unique wildlife, plants and ecosystems. **Australia has become a global deforestation hotspot with one of the worst extinction records on Earth.**"

The real test for the Federal Government is its commitment to halt species extinction. Since 1788 about 100 of Australia's unique flora and fauna species have become extinct. **A huge concern for Ku-ring-gai's environment is that the EPBC failure spells disaster for its many rare and endangered species.**



Once there were Koalas . . .

Once there were koalas in Gordon in the 1920s. There were sightings of koalas in St Ives in the 1960s. Until more recently, koalas were found in Ku-ring-gai Chase National Park. Now they are gone.

Today there is a real threat that koalas will be extinct in NSW before 2050 - yet the NSW Government is prevaricating on implementing strong environmental laws to ensure their survival.

Thankfully Liberal MP Catherine Cusack took a brave and principled crossing of the floor of Parliament in 2020 and defeated the NSW Government's Local Land Services Bill that would have decimated koala habitats.

The NSW National Party have strongly resisted any action to save koalas. The Nature Conservation Council of NSW (NCC) has launched a campaign, concerned that the NSW Liberal Party will concede to NSW National Party demands for more logging, land clearing and housing development in koala habitats.

Forest protection is vital for koala protection and many are calling for the cessation of logging in state forests, particularly following the 2019-20 Black Summer bushfires that devastated koala's populations - along with 3 billion other animals. The NSW Government must reconsider its economic agenda for more urban development, logging and agriculture that will destroy koala habitat and their very existence.

The NSW Government will soon put forward new legislation that supposedly will protect koalas but many believe they are based on political deals rather than evidence based science. A deal with the National Party threatens to exclude rural zones from koala protected areas.

The Nature Conservation Council of NSW (NCC) will be holding a rally on World Environment Day, 5 June 2021.

Celebrating Our History of Tree Lovers

It is often said that Ku-ring-gai is the birthplace of the environment movement - as so many passionate conservationists, architects, bushwalkers, artists, and tree lovers lived in Ku-ring-gai, including Annie Forsyth Wyatt—founder of the National Trust, Charles Bean—founder of the Parks and Playground Movement and Paddy Pallin – leader in the national parks movement, just to name a few.

Join FOKE's 2021 Heritage Walk to celebrate the National Trust Heritage Festival on Sunday 16 May 9.45am-12 noon. Meet at Gordon Railway Station.

This walk about Gordon will celebrate the remarkable achievements of Annie Wyatt and the Ku-ring-gai Tree Lovers' Civic League that began in her Gordon home and led to the creation of the National Trust (NSW).

This guided heritage walk will showcase the life of Annie Wyatt and how and why she formed the Ku-ring-gai Tree Lovers' Civic League in 1927.

Learn how Ku-ring-gai's trees, forests and bushland inspired not only Annie Wyatt, and the generations following, to become lifelong advocates for Nature.

Celebrate these tree lovers' legacy and why their passion for trees is more important than ever!



Annie Wyatt 1885-1961



FOKE's National Trust's Heritage Festival Walk

Ku-ring-gai's History of Tree Lovers
 Sunday 16 May, 2021
 9.45am—12 noon

Meet at Gordon Railway Station ticket office 9.45am
 Bookings **ESSENTIAL**
 Contact Janine Kitson
 0428 860 623
 E: janine_kitson@tpg.com.au

FOKE Environment Awards 2020

The Jan Langley Sustainability Prize for 2020 was awarded to Drishti, from Lindfield East Public School (photo below).

The Jean Posen Environment award for a student at Lindfield Public School who has a passion for improving sustainable practices was won by Annabelle Jones. Annabelle was recognised for having a heart to improve the environment and is keen to make a difference.



Jack Munday 1929-2020

From Judy Munday

Response from Judy Munday to FOKE's condolence letter on the loss of Jack Munday, 12 Sept, 2020.

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 Unions, 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.

Warm regards

Judy Munday