



MEDIA RELEASE

19 AUGUST 2013

PARLIAMENT LOBBY DAY – NSW PLANNING REFORMS

Ku-ring-gai residents take concerns about planning reforms to Parliament House

Local residents from Ku-ring-gai took their fight for a fairer planning system to NSW Parliament House today.

Representatives from the Friends of Ku-ring-gai Environment Inc (FOKE) met briefly with Jonathan O’Dea MP in Parliament House to handover a paper outlining FOKE’s concerns about the State Government’s draft Planning Bill.

“People in Ku-ring-gai strongly oppose the draft *Planning Bill* as it currently formulated because it will deny local people a real say in the way our suburbs and streets develop,” FOKE President Kathy Cowley said.

“That is simply not good enough. We want the government to substantially amend it’s Bill or withdraw it all together.”

Kathy Cowley said the main concerns with the legislation include:

- Removal of the principles of ecologically sustainable development
- Plans to have 80% of development assessed without community consultation
- Reduction of environment protection zones
- Restriction of legal appeal rights
- Risks of serious corruption in decision making

“Under the proposed changes ...

Complying and code assessment

“People in Ku-ring-gai will be denied a say in 80 per cent of development decisions under these planning reforms. The government wants the vast bulk of development considered as complying or code assessable, with no community consultation and no assessment of the environmental and social impacts. This would be a disaster for Ku-ring-gai.

Strategic planning

“A good planning system should create vibrant, sustainable communities and protect important environmental values in Ku-ring-gai, not just enable rapid approval of poorly planned development. We support strategic planning but are deeply concerned that new system will not protect the things we love about living in Ku-ring-gai.”

Heritage

“Reducing local input into approval decisions is a serious threat to the natural and cultural heritage of Ku-ring-gai. If these reforms go through unchanged, councils will only know a heritage item is under threat if it happens to be listed on a heritage register or local environment plan.

“If the government limits community input to just 20 per cent of developments it will be disastrous because there will be fewer opportunities for expert heritage assessment and input from the community.”

Unequal rights – developers v residents

“The existing planning system already favours developers who have the resources and connections to ensure their voices are heard and their interests are protected.

“This new system will entrench that power even further and deny ordinary people many of the rights enjoyed by the developers.

“These proposals will almost certainly be misused by developers, undermining certainty and any community buy-in that may have come out of effective strategic planning.”

Corruption risk

“The government claims accountability and transparency will be improved by the new system, but under the draft Bill the Minister and the Director-General have wide powers to do as they please.

“Under the draft Planning Bill, the Minister will be able to override the strategic planning process the government claims will give people more say over how their communities develop.

“These are the sorts of powers that have led to serious corruption in local councils and at the highest levels of government.

Legal appeals

“Community groups mount only one per cent of all merits appeals against planning decisions yet the state government wants to tip the balance further in the developer’s favour. Where is the justice in that?”

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