Lindfield Village Hub Update

As you are undoubtedly aware, FOKE and the Ku-ring-gai community has been fighting the over-development of the Lindfield Village Hub for the past 4 years.

In August this year, Council made its recommendations to Councillors to approve a massive development of the site which would allow three residential towers of 8, 10 and 14 storeys. The extensive community consultation was ignored which had recommended nothing higher than the previously approved self-funding plan of three 7 storey towers. This earlier model also included a significantly larger open green space.

High rise heights of 10 and 14 storeys would set a precedent for all of Ku-ring-gai if approved.

Following protests by the Lindfield and Ku-ring-gai community, including Davidson MP Jonathon O'Dea, on August 20th, Council amended the plan to be a maximum of 9 storeys. The clause inserted was that the height of this development should be no higher than the highest building in Lindfield, which is the height of the Aqualand building in Lindfield Avenue, which stands at 8 storeys. The resolution also nominated the maximum size of the park, plaza, library and community facility which are the same size as the original 2015 Council plan.

As the previous approved 2015 model met all the self-funding requirements with a 7 storey set of 3 buildings, we still do not have answers as to why this change occurred. We now must remain vigilant that further height amendments are not incorporated and that the Lindfield Library and Community Facilities on the existing Lindfield Library site are maintained until new facilities are operational.

Thank you to all members and residents who wrote to Councillors with their protests against the new Lindfield Village Hub plan.

Heritage Camellias Saved

Sydney Trains Director, Mr Rod Smith, has met with FOKE to share his delight in returning five of Professor E.G. Waterhouse’s original 1930s camellias back into Gordon Railway Station’s gardens.

These original Camellias were removed and stored off site by Ku-ring-gai Council and Bill Parker of Camellius in 2018 until they could be replanted back into Gordon Railway Station gardens.

Not only have Sydney Trains, with Ku-ring-gai Council, rescued, stored and replanted Professor Waterhouse’s camellias, but they have also replanted 39 new Camellia sasanqua plants to recreate the lengthy hedge that was removed when Platform 1 was widened and covered with a new canopy in 2018.

Sydney Trains have taken the initiative to plant a new green vertical garden to cover the western Bus Interchange wall, facing Gordon Rail Station.

A plaque now commemorates this collaboration between Sydney Trains, Ku-ring-gai Council and the community.

Renowned Ku-ring-gai heritage expert, Jennifer Harvey, was able to confirm that Ku-ring-gai Council worked with eminent camellia expert and linguist Professor E.G. Waterhouse in 1927 on garden plans for Gordon Station costing 1,000 pounds.

In 2018 Sydney Trains gave strong assurances to FOKE that they would protect the State Heritage values of Gordon Railway Station and its gardens. And they have. These works follow a strong tradition of garden ‘beautification’ works for Ku-ring-gai railway gardens. It is something we can all be proud of and extend to other stations.

Ku-ring-gai Chase National Park

UNESCO Update

Over 2019, the FOKE sub-committee has spoken to a range of experts on the geology, flora and fauna of Ku-ring-Gai Chase National Park (KCNP). In addition, we have researched a list of unique and endangered plants and vegetation through contact with the Royal Botanical Gardens. Having also spoken to advisors in the area of UNESCO World Heritage Listing, and evaluated the detailed criteria, we have made the decision to initially apply for UNESCO Global Geopark listing.

We see this an important first step in engaging the appropriate groups to assist in the further development of any potential World Heritage Listing. Specifically, KCNP has had Commonwealth Heritage Listing since 2006.

UNESCO Global Geoparks are single, unified geographical areas where sites and landscapes of international geological significance are managed with a holistic concept of protection, education and sustainable development. A Global Geopark does not offer any additional protection to the area other than what is in place through government legislation and regulation. In establishing a UNESCO Global Geopark, it becomes the responsibility of the Geopark managing authority to both respect any existing regulatory protection measures, as well as put in place appropriate geoconservation measures or controls not already provided by the NPWS.

Reviewing the Application criteria for a Global Geopark it is clear that KCNP already meets many of the criteria. Specifically, community engagement, natural and cultural heritage, management structure and geoconservation.

We thank Angus Robinson from the Australian Geoscience Council, for his on-going assistance in this project.