



## **MEDIA RELEASE**

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### **DRAFT NSW BIODIVERSITY AND CONSERVATION LAWS TAKING A GIANT LEAP BACKWARDS**

Friends of Ku-ring-gai Environment (FOKE) calls on the NSW Government to withdraw its Draft Biodiversity Conservation Bill 2016 and Draft Local Land Services Amendment Bill 2016.

Kathy Cowley said “Instead FOKE calls on the NSW Government to work with NSW’s peak conservation groups to strengthen the provisions of the Native Vegetation Act 2003 and the Threatened Species Conservation Act 1995. There is an urgent need to strengthen habitat protection because so many of our wildlife are threatened with extinction.”

“Stronger biodiversity laws are needed and must be scientifically based on the principles of ecologically sustainable development that include the precautionary principle and inter-generational equity. It is imperative as we face the crisis of climate change that the NSW Government demonstrate leadership by protecting NSW’s environment. It needs to seriously invest in restoring and protecting NSW’s environment to halt escalating biodiversity extinction. It is vital that any legislation enshrines the concept of habitat protection. Without it wildlife cannot exist.” Kathy Cowley said

If the Native Vegetation Act 2003 is repealed it will permit broad scale clearing. This will mean extinction for many species.

Ku-ring-gai has in its care three endangered ecological communities the Blue Gum High Forest, Sydney Turpentine Ironbark Forest (STIF) and Duffy’s Forest.

“FOKE has made numerous submissions to local, State and Federal Government for the protection of Ku-ring-gai’s nationally significant environment. Biodiversity is important to FOKE. As part of the 2016 National Trust Heritage Festival FOKE ran several walks and talks focusing on biodiversity protection and concluded with a forum called Biodiversity Matters. Ku-ring-gai Matters’. Kathy Cowley said.

“FOKE is deeply concerned that the proposed Bills fail to protect NSW’s wildlife and vegetation at a time when NSW is facing a record number of species extinctions (1). According to the NSW Government Office of Environment and Heritage (OEH): 59% of mammals, 34% of amphibians, 30% of birds, 18% of reptiles and 14% of plants indigenous to NSW are threatened with extinction; 968 individual species of native animals and plants are threatened with extinction, with 72 of these species presumed extinct. FOKE argues that any new environment legislation must have stronger environmental protections that promote the recovery and resilience for threatened species, populations and ecological communities by protecting in situ habitat. “

“FOKE is particularly concerned that the legislation will negatively impact on the biodiversity of NSW, including Ku-ring-gai where critical habitats of remnant Blue Gum Forest has been extinguished through rezonings for medium density. One of the most serious environment issues facing Ku-ring-gai’s biodiversity is this land clearing for medium density that has caused loss of deep soil, seed bank and exacerbated habitat fragmentation. Land clearing and fragmentation are severe threatening processes to the survival of the threatened ecological communities and native species. Nor is there any cumulative assessment of environmental damage and loss through land clearing for medium density housing, agriculture or mining.” Kathy Cowley said.

FOKE is concerned that the proposed biodiversity legislative changes for urban areas, including land management maps, have yet to be released indicating that the consultation process is flawed and lacks transparency.

“The Bills represent a backwards step for biodiversity conservation in NSW and will exacerbate climate change. The fact that all of NSW peak environmental organisations and The EDO have grave concerns about the proposed legislation causes FOKE to have severe reservations about the new legislation. FOKE urges the NSW Government to withdraw these bills. We believe they are flawed, contradictory, poorly written and significantly weaken the protections of biodiversity for NSW, including Ku-ring-gai.” Kathy Cowley said

**For media comment, please call Kathy Cowley on 0431 158 880 or 9416 9007**

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<sup>1</sup> Environment Protection Authority 2015. NSW State of the Environment Report 2015. Environment Protection Authority, Sydney, Australia.