



## **Council Meeting - 25th March 2024**

### **CCL015-24 Report of the Environment and Planning Committee 11th March 2024: ENV008-24 OUTCOMES OF COMMUNITY CONSULTATION AND PREPARATION OF BIODIVERSITY AND CHARACTER PLANNING PROPOSAL**

#### ***Councillor Peter Mahoney - Address to Council Meeting***

The existing Foreshore Scenic Protection Area (or FSPA) was created in 2012 by Hurstville City Council, which showed much foresight as it safeguarded native flora and fauna (many of which are either endangered or threatened) and their essential habitat on private properties in the Peakhurst Ward, the aesthetics of the leafy suburbs with an admirably high tree canopy and highly vegetated native gardens, which are uncommon in the Sydney Metropolitan Area, as well as the health of the Georges River. In 2021 the FSPA was extended to cover parts of the former Kogarah LGA which was also a commendable move.

Through hundreds of submissions received by Council in 2020, and also last year (where the community was given a record 24 weeks to express their opinions) residents strongly advocated that these controls should continue.

The expert staff recommendations contained in this report provide reassurance to the community that existing controls will not only be maintained, but also strengthened so that our rich biodiversity will continue to flourish throughout our foreshore suburbs through stringent measures. I'll name just a few of them:

1. Safeguarding areas with both moderate and high terrestrial biodiversity values;
2. Establishing new local character planning provisions for Unique Character Areas;
3. Maintaining existing lot sizes for areas taken out of the FSPA, that is, minimum subdivision lot size of 700sqm, with 1,000sqm for dual occupancies;
4. Increased landscaped areas which will protect and enhance biodiversity and encourage the recovery of threatened species;

5. Mandating larger minimum landscaped area requirements, and
6. Minimum 20% landscaped areas for multi-dwelling houses, terraces and manor houses, in the event that the State Government's Low and Mid-Rise Housing Reforms are approved.

The Federal Government's 2021 'State of the Environment Report' states in part, "In a rapidly changing climate, with unsustainable development and use of resources, the general outlook for our environment is deteriorating", "Our inability to adequately manage pressures will continue to result in species extinctions and deteriorating ecosystem condition" and "environmental decline affects the wellbeing of Australians". Sadly, Australia is not doing well in the conservation stakes through natural occurrences such as drought, flood, and bushfire, and man-made events, for example, land clearing and climate change.

I firmly believe that this recommendation is an excellent result for the environment, and accurately reflects the wishes of so many of us who highly value the incredible biodiversity which is facilitated by our trees, bushland, parks and reserves and private gardens and of course the Georges River. It is also testimony to the expertise of the Director, Environment and Planning, Manager, Strategic Planning and to their staff who so closely and carefully listened to wishes of the community including Oatley Flora and Fauna Conservation Society and the Friends of Oatley. As Councillor representative on the Georges River Combined Councils Committee (or Riverkeeper) I can certainly appreciate the positive effects which will ensue for our iconic waterway and the landscape which adjoins it.

It goes a long way (at least within Georges River) towards addressing the concerns spelt out in the State of the Nation Report and I sincerely hope that the federal, state and territory governments and councils across the country follow the superb environmental lead which will be set by our Council. Finally and perhaps most importantly for many of us who live in the existing FSPA, I sincerely believe that Dr Sharyn Cullis (who held a PhD in Science and Technology, and who, as Secretary of the Georges River Environmental Alliance compiled an excellent, evidence-based submission and spearheaded the 2020 community campaign to maintain the FSPA safeguards, and who sadly passed away in 2022) would have been delighted with these recommendations.