



Media Release

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Eryldene: Historic House and Garden at Risk from State Government's Housing Planning Policy Changes

The Eryldene Trust is calling for urgent action to protect the iconic Eryldene Historic House and Garden (Eryldene) from the State Government's proposed planning changes that would allow multi-story residential developments within heritage conservation areas, impacting the significance of the century-old house and garden.

"The changes outlined in the *Explanation of Intended Effect: Changes to create low and mid-rise housing, December 2023 (the EIE Document)*; and *Transport Oriented Development Program, December 2023 (the TOD Program)*, could have devastating and irreversible impacts on this national treasure" said Eryldene spokesperson Michael Waterhouse.

"The impacts are not just aesthetic but environmental. For Eryldene, such intense adjacent development threatens the garden's microclimate and its internationally recognised camellia collection, affecting vegetation health due to overshadowing, altered air flow patterns, soil moisture content variations and increased pathogens.

Located within 400 metres of Gordon Station, Eryldene is a rare and intact combination of outstanding early 20th-century architecture with a uniquely significant horticultural collection. The buildings and gardens were designed by renowned Australian architect William Hardy Wilson and Professor Eben Gowrie Waterhouse, a unique blend of cultural and natural heritage, which is looked after and opened to the community by the Eryldene Trust.

The Trust's position is that the proposed planning changes should not apply within Heritage Conservation Areas nor should they apply to heritage items and sites adjoining heritage items, especially those items listed on the State Heritage Register (SHR).

The Trust strongly advocates that the new residential development contemplated in the EIE Document and particularly in Part 2 of the TOD Program should be subject to a master plan process where the development site adjoins an item on the SHR. In these cases, the proposed pattern book design guidance should not be applicable, and a master planning approach should be mandated.

The Trust is also appealing to the public to support its campaign to save Eryldene by engaging actively with the planning process, writing to their local MPs, and spreading the word on social media.

"We cannot stand by and watch as blanket planning changes threaten not only the physical structures and horticultural collections but the context and very essence of what makes Eryldene a national treasure," says Michael Waterhouse. "We urge the State Government to engage collaboratively with all stakeholders, including the Trust, Kuringgai council, the community and heritage experts, to amend and adapt the proposed policies and controls before changes take effect – to avoid damaging our nation's history forever."

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Background

Eryldene was amongst the first places to be heritage listed in NSW, in 1979 and is included on the NSW State Heritage Register and the heritage schedules of the Ku-ring-gai LEP 2015 as well as being classified by the National Trust. It is also within the C7 Heritage Conservation Area under Ku-ring-gai LEP 2015.

However, its proximity to Gordon Rail Station makes it vulnerable to the proposed NSW Housing Policy planning changes to facilitate low/mid-rise housing developments in residential zones, and high rise apartment buildings within 400 m of the station via Transport Oriented Development (TOD) program.

The proposed planning changes would have the following negative consequences for Eryldene and its surroundings:

- The height potential of high rise apartment buildings immediately adjacent to Eryldene's boundaries will substantially impact the conservation, use and activation of the house and garden museum. The proposed height of up to 21 metres and absence of a minimum lot size and boundary width under the Part 2 TOD Program would lead to visually overdeveloped sites, especially with the potential 30% height and floor space affordable housing bonus.
- Substantial excavation for underground car parking for such developments will affect surface and subsurface water flows - impacting Eryldene's significant camellia collection and mature garden; with vibration impacts potentially damage adjoining heritage buildings and garden structures .
- The intensity of development relative to small allotment sizes will remove or substantially compromise Gordon's landscape cover, including large canopy trees, relying on deep soil planting and impacting biodiversity, the visual character of the HCA, its microclimate and potentially increasing heat island effects.
- Eryldene's wider setting of low-rise residential development would be substantially impacted, adversely affecting its streetscape setting and historic context.
- Utilizing the proposed standardized pattern book for housing designs would be inadequate for addressing the unique conditions of HCAs or sites near heritage items. *Design Guide for Heritage* is the relevant government guidance.

A master plan process is more rigorous and informative than a standard statement of environmental effects which accompanies a development application. Master planning by the Kuringgai Council would allow for a thorough investigation and analysis of matters, impacting HCAs and appropriate community consultation.

There are numerous successful examples of master planning which have included heritage items and Eryldene could be a test case for examining how adapting the currently proposed planning controls could achieve both heritage and affordable housing outcomes. A collaborative approach is needed to ensure the sustainable existence of Eryldene ahead.

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Photograph opportunities by arrangement