



NSW Legislative Council Hansard

Redfern-Waterloo Authority Bill

Extract from NSW Legislative Council Hansard and Papers Tuesday 7 December 2004.

Second Reading

The Hon. TONY KELLY (Minister for Rural Affairs, Minister for Local Government, Minister for Emergency Services, and Minister for Lands) [8.13 p.m.]: I move:

That this bill be now read a second time.

The communities of Redfern and Waterloo, compared with the rest of Sydney, are beset by a series of social challenges. Many of these challenges are unique to the area and require specific service and policy responses. The suburbs are home to particularly disadvantaged communities, with high numbers of unemployed people, low-income families and public housing tenants. Waterloo was rated as the fifth poorest suburb out of 526 Sydney suburbs in the 2001 index of relative socioeconomic disadvantage. Redfern was ranked in the bottom one-third. Nearly 60 per cent of Waterloo's residents are not in the labour force and are benefit dependent, while 12 per cent of Redfern households in 2001 lived on an income of less than \$200 a week.

The area faces problems related to community safety, drug and alcohol abuse and extreme poverty. Social disadvantage is also a problem in the Aboriginal communities of Redfern and Waterloo. The New South Wales Government is committed to delivering the long-term changes needed in the area and delivering an improved quality of life for all residents. On 26 October 2004 the Premier announced the creation of a new authority, under the control of one Minister, to have sole responsibility for implementing development and urban renewal strategies within the area. The Redfern-Waterloo Authority Act 2004 establishes the Redfern Waterloo-Authority as a key building block of the Government's Redfern-Waterloo Plan 2004-2014.

The Redfern-Waterloo Authority will manage public infrastructure, land and properties in the area and promote the social and economic development of the community. Infrastructure development in Redfern and Waterloo is one of the keys to creating a sustainable and strong community. The New South Wales Government is the largest landowner in the area, with prime assets such as the Australian Technology Park, the railway station, Rachel Forster Hospital and Redfern Public School sites and the public housing estates. The development of these government assets in Redfern and Waterloo must deliver significant social and economic returns. It is important that the Government maximises its return on these assets if the urgent needs in the area are to be addressed.

By establishing a dedicated body, the authority can deal in commercial property management and development at a distance from government. Unlike a private company, the Redfern-Waterloo Authority will remain accountable to the Minister and to the community. It will allow the management and oversight of capital works projects to be conducted with maximum sensitivity to local issues, and encourage the integration of planning of land and infrastructure with broader social and community objectives. In the past the Government has established purpose-designed development corporations and authorities, such as the Darling Harbour Authority, the Sydney Cove Redevelopment Authority, the Sydney Olympic Park Authority and the Sydney Harbour Foreshore Authority.

This past experience and thinking has guided the drafting of the bill, as has the principle that our efforts to renew the communities of Redfern and Waterloo must be comprehensive. The principal functions of the authority are to promote and undertake the economic development and use of its land, including the provision of infrastructure and improvement of public spaces. The authority will also provide and promote employment opportunities and housing choice for local residents and will manage and encourage cultural activities. To assist the authority in the exercise of its functions, a Redfern-Waterloo Plan will be prepared and maintained. The plan may include provisions for the strategic vision for the improvement of the area, urban design, human services, employment, development, infrastructure, land-use zoning, public land renewal and other matters considered essential by the authority. Once the plan is approved by the Minister, the authority will be required to ensure that it is implemented.

The plan will focus on using infrastructure and commercial development as a driver for job creation and providing employment opportunities for local residents. Employment growth is a particularly important component of the authority's objectives. By providing meaningful jobs for locals, including the Aboriginal community, we can crack the cycle of welfare dependence and social disadvantage. The Redfern-Waterloo Plan will be kept under review, and the community will be able to comment on the plan and provide valuable feedback. In carrying out its functions, the authority is to liaise with other government agencies dealing with cultural, public housing, health and other social or community issues in the area. It will also consult with non-government organisations where appropriate.

Where relevant, the authority is to take into consideration the principles of social, economic, ecological and other sustainable development. The authority builds on the work that has been undertaken by the Redfern-Waterloo Partnership Project since 2002. The authority and the Redfern-Waterloo Partnership Project will work hand in hand to ensure that the Government delivers long-term and sustainable solutions that these two communities need and want. The authority and the Redfern-Waterloo Partnership Project are complementary. The Redfern-Waterloo Partnership Project will lead the Government's reform of the human service system in Redfern and Waterloo, whilst the focus of the authority is job creation, urban renewal, improved public amenity and enhanced commercial activity. Together this will create a strong and viable

community.

The bill establishes the authority as a separate statutory body with a governing board of no more than nine members, in addition to the authority's chief executive. The board will be accountable to the Minister and the community. The bill ensures that at least one of the appointed members of the board will be an Aboriginal person. To enable greater input into the authority's activities, the Minister may, under clause 12, establish advisory committees to ensure that additional expert advice and experience, including local experience, is brought in as needed. The authority's operational area covers Redfern, Eveleigh, Darlington and Waterloo. It will include the Australian Technology Park, which under the bill will be transferred from the Sydney Harbour Foreshore Authority. The Australian Technology Park is already the home to the New South Wales Cancer Institute.

It is an area with great potential, and may be developed into a biotechnology hub bringing a new and dynamic focus to the area. There is also a small portion of land within the authority's operational area, which currently falls within the ambit of the South Sydney Development Corporation. Under the legislation, this land will be brought within the scope of the authority as well to ensure that the authority is the sole agency responsible for planning, development and management in the area. Clause 28 refers to the declaration of State-significant sites. This will enable the Minister to be given development consent authority for State-significant developments within the authority's area of operations. The Minister may then subdelegate this function to the authority or the Council of the City of Sydney. The Government will continue to work closely with the council.

Clause 29 is comparable with the provision that was passed for Walsh Bay and ensures that heritage-protected properties within the authority's ambit may be redeveloped in the optimal manner, to the benefit of the entire community. The bill, like that for Walsh Bay, precludes the provisions of the Heritage Act 1977 from applying to development in the area that is State significant. This function will only be exercised where the Minister is satisfied that the development is essential for achieving the strategic vision articulated in the Redfern-Waterloo Plan. The work of the authority will be funded through the establishment of a Redfern-Waterloo Fund. Clause 33 of the bill allows for the fund to be applied to enable the authority to exercise its functions.

The fund will be financed through commercial activity on government land and properties and any profit made from the future sale of this land or property. The fund will also collect moneys raised from a new community levy and developer contributions. A contributions plan will be developed by the authority in due course. The Government intends that moneys raised through the authority's activities will be spent on infrastructure development in Redfern and Waterloo. The new Redfern-Waterloo Authority sits as a key part of a package of Carr Government initiatives that address infrastructure, social services, community renewal and the renewal of the precinct in and around the Block.

The establishment of the authority, combined with the work of the Redfern-Waterloo Partnership Project demonstrates that the Carr Government is committed to ensuring that all people who live in Redfern and Waterloo have access to the same opportunities and services that are available to all other Australians. The bill recognises that there is a lot of great work being done in the community by government, by community groups and by the people who live and work in the area. With this bill, we can co-ordinate, harness and boost these efforts under the reach of one authority, under the charge of one Minister. It is a crucial step in achieving real and sustainable change in the area. I commend the bill to the House.