INQUIRY INTO ISSUES RELATING TO REDFERN/WATERLOO

Organisation:

Name: Emeritus Professor Tony Vinson

Position: [-]

Telephone:

Date Received:

Theme:

Summary

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28.5.2004

Ms J Langsworth
Acting Director
Standing Committee on Social Issues
Legislative Council
Parliament House
Macquarie Street
Sydney
NSW 2000

Dear Ms Langsworth,

Inquiry into Issues Relating to Redfern/Waterloo

Following our telephone conversation of 27th May, 2004, I am forwarding a brief statement summarising the *disadvantage indicators profiles* of the two areas of concern to the current Inquiry of the Standing Committee on Social Issues. I have prepared the statement with the assistance of a colleague, Mr Brian Cooper,[1] who has worked closely with me in a number of recent studies. The main information used in this submission derives from my recent study of 587 postcode areas in New South Wales[2] (published under the title of *Community Adversity and Resilience,* Jesuit Social Services, 2004).

Postcode areas have been used to study the geographic distribution of social disadvantage because they are the smallest unit for which the type of data used in the 'Community Adversity' study is available. The common characteristic of that data is that it represents direct manifestations of disadvantage rather than personal attributes presumed to be disadvantageous.

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[1] Mr Cooper is a social mapping researcher working with Westir Ltd., Blacktown.
[2] The study also included 647 Victorian postcodes.

Postcodes also generally have less socially heterogeneous populations than larger units like Local Government Areas. They are, therefore, less likely to be places where a high degree of disadvantage in one section is cancelled out by a high level of *advantage* in another. Still, that kind of averaging out effect can take place even within postcodes and to some extent that is true of 2016 Redfern which includes not only the disadvantaged areas around Redfern Station but also more advantaged areas shown within the postcode boundaries (marked by thick brown lines on the first of the two attached maps). The locality encloses the area known as 'The Block' at its western end and extends to South Dowling Street in the east and Cleveland Street in the north. When a major degree of social heterogeneity exists within an area it is as well to supplement the indicators available at postcode level (see immediately below) with the smaller scale analysis afforded by the Australian Bureau of Statistic's *Index of Relative Socio-economic Disadvantage,* which is based on census data:

Community Adversity indicators
for postcode 2016 (Redfern)

Indicators	Rank position (Total p'codes NSW 587)
Child maltreatment	402
Court convictions	51
Childhood accidents	332
Disability Support Pension	129
Mortality ratio	39
Early school leavers	448
Low birth-weight	300
Low work skills	475
Low income families	230
Long term unemployment	142
Unemployment (census)	244
Imprisonment	41
Year 12 incomplete/no training	441
Social disadvantage 2003	183
Social disadvantage 1999	188

The above information places 2016 at a little below the one-third rank position in the State on social disadvantage with relatively short life expectancy, imprisonment and court convictions being the outstanding indicators. These three distinguishing features are consistent with a significant proportion of the postcode population being of Aboriginal background, a fact illustrated by the second of the attached maps. A major concentration of Indigenous people relative to other parts of the State is colour-coded red, successively lower concentrations being signified by pink, mustard, green and yellow respectively. The relevant map shows that Aboriginal people reside in significant numbers not only within the area known as 'The Block' but also within the Waterloo Housing Estate and other parts of postcode 2017.

The *Index of Relative Socio-economic Disadvantage* provides data on census-based information at the *collectors' district* (sub-postcode) level. The index is derived from attributes that, in the judgement of the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS), indicate relative social and economic hardship. Variables included are low income, low educational attainment, unskilled occupations, high unemployment, single-parent families, renting households and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders. The last few of the mentioned characteristics assume the negative consequences of certain group or status attributes in a way that I believe is not true of the 'Community Adversity' approach nevertheless there is a high degree of overlap[3] between the two methods. The attached *Disadvantage* map shows the degree of ABS assessed disadvantage of collectors' districts within the Redfern postcode. They are colour-coded and range in terms of severity from red (a level of extreme disadvantage experienced by 10% of the State's population), through pink (experienced by the next 11-25%), mustard, green and yellow (the *least* disadvantaged). According to the ABS, the population of 'The Block' is at a level of disadvantage below an immediately adjacent part of Redfern and also below major parts of the Waterloo Housing Estate. Certainly my own *Community Adversity* indicators for 2017 Waterloo place that postcode among the most disadvantaged in the State[4]:

Community Adversity indicators
for postcode 2017 (Waterloo)

Indicators	Rank position (Total p'codes NSW 587)
Child maltreatment	451
Court convictions	14
Childhood accidents	235
Disability Support Pension	6
Mortality ratio	34
Early school leavers	257
Low birth-weight	467
Low work skills	216
Low income families	201
Long term unemployment	15
Unemployment (census)	21
Imprisonment	7
Year 12 incomplete/no training	346
Social disadvantage 2003	14
Social disadvantage 1999	22

Unemployment (among those seeking work) is clearly a major problem and so too is health as reflected in the postcode's relatively high position on the (short) life expectancy indicator.
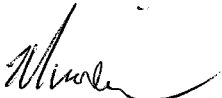
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[3] In the sense of highly significant positive correlations between the findings.

[4] As the Green Square population builds up the overall postcode profile can be expected to change.

Problems concerning children are comparatively less severe and the number of 17 – 24 year old young people still receiving education or training is a sign of hope for the future. However, to be ranked 7th on rate of imprisonment and 14th on criminal court convictions is a major cause for concern.

I hope that this statistical information is of assistance to the Standing Committee on Social Issues.

Yours sincerely,

Tony Vinson
Honorary Professor
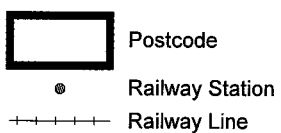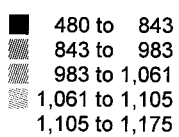
2008

Area known as
"The Block"

REDFERN STN

2016

2017

GREEN SQUARE STN

Disadvantage

- 480 to 843
- 843 to 983
- 983 to 1,061
- 1,061 to 1,105
- 1,105 to 1,175

Postcode

⊛ Railway Station
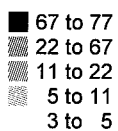
┼┼┼┼┼ Railway Line

Based on 2001 Local Government Area Boundaries
Source: ABS 2001 Census Table B01
Produced by: WESTIR (02) 96223011 westir@pnc.com.au
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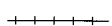
Redfern Waterloo

Indigenous Persons

2008

Area known as
"The Block"

REDFERN STN

2016

2017

GREEN SQUARE STN

Total Indigenous Persons

- 67 to 77
- 22 to 67
- 11 to 22
- 5 to 11
- 3 to 5

Postcode

Railway Station

Railway Line

Based on 2001 Local Government Area Boundaries
Source: ABS 2001 Census Table B01
Produced by: WESTIR (02) 96223011 westir@pnc.com.au
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