

Standing Committee on Social Issues  
NSW Parliament

### **Inquiry Into Issues Relating To Redfern/Waterloo**

Dear Members

The Hornsby Area Residents for Reconciliation (HARR) thank you for this opportunity to provide comment to the Inquiry Into Issues Relating To Redfern/Waterloo.

The Terms of Reference for the Inquiry are focussed on the Redfern/Waterloo area, and this reflects the fact that events leading to the Inquiry occurred in this area. However, the repercussions of those events reach across a far wider area. The impacts of those events have touched all Aboriginal and Islander communities.

An issue of concern to HARR is the influence that the recent events have had on Aboriginal and Islander children in schools. Sensationalist media portrayal of "the Redfern race riots" has a very real potential to foster divisions between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians.

HARR is particularly concerned that Indigenous school children may feel more vulnerable at school as a direct result of media interpretation of the recent events as "race riots".

HARR is aware of racist comment that has been directed at Aboriginal children in their schools in the period immediately following the recent events in Redfern and Waterloo. This unacceptable comment has come from other students. Needless to say, this has caused great distress to the children and their families.

It is important that the Committee note that the potential for this situation exists in many schools. HARR recommends that the Committee consider how the Education Department can best respond to this situation to support students and staff when events occur such as those in Redfern and Waterloo.

This could include the development of a departmental protocol for responding quickly to events that can easily lead to discrimination against ethnic minorities. The protocol could be employed when events such as those in Redfern and Waterloo occur. In the recent past it must be noted that other events with an ethnic dimension such as the wars in Iraq and the trials of gang rapists have also led to an increase in offensive behaviours in schools.

HARR suggests that leaving a response to such events to the school Principal is not entirely satisfactory. This is because of the variable attention that inevitably will be given to the issues from one school to the next. Clearly, a departmental response at such times on the need for respect and fairness will give a strong statement to school communities that discrimination remains unacceptable.

Yours sincerely

Ian Tuit  
HARR