

INQUIRY INTO ISSUES RELATING TO REDFERN/WATERLOO

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Theme:

Summary

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Submission Relating to Redfern Waterloo

While the opportunity to better the human service system is one that the Ethnic Child Care Family and Community Services Co-op in principal welcomes it is with some concern in this instance that the news about the Redfern/Waterloo review was received. The central reason for this lies in the announcement that the review did not bring with it any additional resources and instead had the aim of looking at reallocating existing resources. Growth money for existing service providers is a key way if improving the delivery of human services in the area. The waitlists (if kept by organisations which is not the case with Homecare – a statutory authority of the Department of Ageing, Disability and Homecare) of organisations are lengthy and are unable to be alleviated due in part to the lack of clients leaving services.

Another concern is the fact that the review focuses on the Redfern/Waterloo area while neglecting the Surry Hills area. The issues of commonality for all residents in large Department of Housing estates are many and the inner city location of all three (Redfern, Waterloo and Northcott) warrant the inclusion of all three estates in the review. The lack of equity in the distribution of resources between these three estates would have been a worthy topic for focus during the review.

Communication between service providers and government departments as well as communication between government departments would be enhanced by the creation of an overarching human services department. More effective planning and resource distribution would be facilitated. The fact that health facilities are closed without community transport being allocated additional money for medical transport is one such example of where better and more coordinated planning could have been done to meet the needs of local residents. The necessity for various government departments to communicate with one another would also be facilitated by the creation of a human services department. For example when the Department of Housing groups people from the same language group in particular residences they could share a certain amount of this information with other government departments who fund language specific programs to enable them to outreach more effectively while respecting client privacy.

The issues facing groups from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds are many and varied. Of particular significance in the geographical area are the needs of Russian speakers. In our capacity liaising with service providers in the area and in providing an

information and referral service to Russian speakers in eastern Sydney the following issues have arisen:

A large number of Russian speakers arrived recently in Australia as refugees. Estimates of the proportion of Jewish Russian speakers vary but average eighty per cent.

Concentrations of Russian speakers are found in Redfern and Waterloo with the majority living in Department of Housing residences.

Issues for Russian speakers which have been raised during home visits include:

- Safety in Department of Housing
- Communicating with government departments including Department of Housing and Centrelink
- The need for program support to keep social groups viable
- The need for social groups to offer a diverse range of activities that cater to those who worked as professionals and those who were involved in other types of work
- Bus routes of STA buses and adequate public transport

The incidence of diabetes and other health conditions among Russian speakers is high. The prevalence of mental health issues has also been high. The experience of bureaucracy in the former Soviet Union can create mistrust of bureaucratic processes.

A request has been made to the Department of Ageing Disability and Homecare to fund a Russian specific special needs worker however to date this request has not been met with either funds or feedback about the application.

End of Submission