

INQUIRY INTO OVERCOMING INDIGENOUS DISADVANTAGE

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**REDWatch Submission
to the NSW Legislative Council's
Standing Committee on Social Issues Inquiry into
Closing the Gap – Overcoming Indigenous Disadvantage.
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Basis for Submission

“REDwatch is a group of community residents and friends from Redfern, Waterloo, Eveleigh and Darlington who support the existing diversity in these areas and wish to promote sustainable, responsible economic and social development. REDwatch recognises the importance of the Aboriginal community to the area.

REDWatch has been formed to:

- 1. Monitor the activities of the Government (local, state and federal), the Redfern Waterloo Authority, and any other government instrumentality with responsibility for the Redfern, Waterloo, Darlington and Eveleigh area, to ensure that: (a) The strategy benefits a diverse community, (b) Communication and consultation is comprehensive and responsive (c) Pressure is maintained on authorities*
- 2. Provide a mechanism for discussion and action on community issues.*
- 3. Enhance communication between community groups and encourage broad community participation”. (Objects of REDWatch Inc.)*

REDWatch makes this submission with special reference to the inquiry terms of reference which asks the Inquiry to inquire into and report on **“(c) previous Social Issues committee reports containing reference to Aboriginal people – and assess the progress of government in implementing adopted report recommendations”**.

In 2004 the Legislative Council's Standing Committee on Social Issues held an ***Inquiry into issues relating to Redfern and Waterloo (Redfern and Waterloo Inquiry)***. That inquiry had a strong focus on the Aboriginal people who live in Redfern and Waterloo and on government activities that impact upon them. That inquiry issued an Interim Report with 22 recommendations in August 2004 and a further Final Report in December 2004 with 38 recommendations. The progress of Government in implementing these adopted report recommendations should be assessed by the current inquiry under 1 (c) of its terms of reference.

We note that *Redfern and Waterloo Inquiry* Recommendation 37 proposed: ***“That a further parliamentary inquiry into issues in Redfern and Waterloo and measures taken to address them be conducted in 2006”***. No follow up inquiry was conducted so this present inquiry provides an opportunity to re-look at aspects of the *Redfern and Waterloo Inquiry* that relate to Aboriginal people and a follow up Inquiry into all aspects of the implementation of the Government's plans in Redfern Waterloo should be considered.

The covering letter to the Government response to the 2004 *Redfern and Waterloo Inquiry* stated: ***“The Government's plans for Redfern-Waterloo, which were announced in mid to late 2004 took into account issues raised through the course of the Inquiry. Accordingly, the Government's response is divided into seven sections, including: Policing in Redfern-Waterloo, Minister with responsibility for Redfern-Waterloo, Redfern- Waterloo Plan, Redfern-Waterloo Authority, Redfern-Waterloo Partnership Project, Human Services in Redfern-Waterloo, and the Aboriginal Housing Company and Redevelopment of the Block”***. The Government's progress in implementing the recommendations of the *Redfern and Waterloo Inquiry* in these areas in the response should at least be assessed by the current inquiry.

At the end of the inquiry in December 2004 the Government envisaged that:

- ***“The Redfern Waterloo Authority will administer a Redfern Waterloo Fund and manage public infrastructure, land and properties in the area”*** (Premiers Announcement October 26 2004)
- ***“The Redfern-Waterloo Partnership Program (RWPP) - to continue for the medium term, co-ordinating various government services in Redfern-Waterloo and implementing the findings of the Human Services Review”*** (Attachment to Letter sent by Minister Sartor December 2004).
- ***“The Minister responsible for the Redfern-Waterloo Authority will coordinate all State Government funding within the area.”*** (Premiers Announcement October 26 2004)

Despite the Government agreeing in 2004 to extend the RWPP funding until 2008 and to restructure it (Final Report p 147), early in 2005 a decision was made to wind up the RWPP and to incorporate its functions and funding into the Redfern Waterloo Authority (RWA) effective as of 30 June 2005. Hence any recommendations in the *Redfern and Waterloo Inquiry* which refer to the Redfern Waterloo Partnership Project should now be applied to the RWA.

At the time of the *Redfern and Waterloo Inquiry* it was thought that the Human Services Plan and the Redfern Waterloo Plan would be separate plans. The inquiry recommendations reflect this. The Minister, after the establishment of the RWA, decided that the Redfern Waterloo Plan would be made up of plans for three separate areas. The Redfern Waterloo Plan currently has the following components:

- Human Services Plan Phase One - December 2005,
- The Employment and Enterprise Plan - May 2006
- Built Environment Plan Stage One - August 2006.

A Draft Human Services Plan (Phase 2), covering services provided to older people, people with disabilities, homeless people and migrant communities, was exhibited in late 2006 but has not yet been approved by Government. A Built Environment Plan Stage 2 dealing with public and affordable housing is under preparation and is expected to be released for consultation in the first half of 2008.

The RWA is of the view that everything required of the Redfern Waterloo Plan will be met by these individual plans. REDWatch is of the view that key areas that should be in the Redfern Waterloo Plan are missing as a result of the Plan being constructed in this way. REDWatch is also of the view that interactions between aspects of the three plans have not been adequately addressed. REDWatch provided the RWA with a proposal for how the Plan could be prepared in consultation with the community in May 2005 but this was ignored. For proposal details see www.redwatch.org.au/redwatch/statements/2005redwatch/050531Plan/ .

Redfern Waterloo is important to Aboriginal People

Redfern Waterloo is an important focus for Aboriginal people from around metropolitan Sydney, NSW and Australia. It was the birth place of many of the Independent Aboriginal Organisations such as the Aboriginal Medical Service, the Aboriginal Housing Company, the Aboriginal Legal Service and Aboriginal Children's Services just to mention a few. This tradition continues, in 2007 Redfern action put the story of the neglect of Black Diggers on the national agenda. Redfern is the site of the Block, the first land purchased by Aboriginal people with funding from the Federal Government for housing for Aboriginal people.

With the gentrification of Redfern many Aboriginal people have been pushed out of the area as rents became expensive, leaving the present Aboriginal population living primarily in public housing. According to the city of Sydney website 2006 data shows 276 Indigenous people in Redfern and 369 in Waterloo-Zetland based on Australian Bureau of Statistics, Census of Population and Housing, 2006. While the Aboriginal population who reside in Redfern Waterloo is relatively small, Aboriginal people come to the area for services and to connect with friends and family. Redfern is usually the first port of call for Aboriginal people coming to Sydney from NSW and around Australia. Any decisions about the future of Redfern Waterloo need to involve the Aboriginal families and clans that are part of the community and the broad range of services which cater for those who visit the area.

The Aboriginal community in Redfern is not homogenous. It is made up of Aboriginal people from different tribal groups from throughout Sydney, NSW and Australia. This means that successful engagement with the Aboriginal community involves talking to a wide range of different people who are not represented by any one organisation or leader / elder. Government's approach has tended to

be to work with and support the parts of the community that are most easily identified or who think similarly to government and to ignore and deride those that they find difficult to deal with. The RWA's involvement with the Redfern Waterloo Aboriginal community has not been immune from this, especially in their use of past disagreements between various parts of the community to try and stop the Aboriginal Housing Company's Pemulwuy Project. Trying to play various groups off against each other didn't work and the outcome was that many who had historical differences with those currently involved with the housing company have come out in their support.

Most in the Aboriginal community who live in Redfern Waterloo have had negative experiences in their interactions with various arms of Government, either first hand or through their kin. As some of the most disadvantaged in the community, Aboriginal people's everyday experience of how the federal and state systems work and interact with them should provide valuable input to Government in the task of improving government human services and in assessing what can assist in overcoming Indigenous disadvantage. Sadly the first hand experience of marginalised people is seldom listened to or valued by those exercising power over how assistance is delivered.

Each time the system is exposed as wanting, as REDWatch believes it currently is in Redfern Waterloo, we get a new study that digs up most of the same old facts and new policies that change some procedure to address the shortcomings. Seldom are the procedures taken back and tested against the experience of the service suppliers and the service users to see if they reflect their experience and address their concerns and priorities. On the occasions that input is sought, as it was in part in the preparation of the RWA Human Services Plan with Service providers, the input is often ignored or dismissed by government policy makers as irrelevant rather than taken seriously.

It appears that government departments only seem to refine service provision rather than finding long term ways to minimise the problems which cause people to seek such services in the first place. Any serious attempt to overcome Indigenous disadvantage has to involve the adequate provisions of services to meet existing human needs, early intervention to try and prevent problems at the earliest possible stage and strategies to assist people out of disadvantage rather than to just better servicing them in their disadvantage.

If the *Inquiry into Closing the Gap – Overcoming Indigenous Disadvantage* is to produce results it will have to come to grips with a community like Redfern. It will have to understand how the Government's policies and ways of doing business, both past and present, impact on the different parts of the Aboriginal Community both constructively and detrimentally. In looking at its recommendations it needs also to identify the factors that are specific to successful implementation in an inner city location like Redfern and Waterloo with a diverse Aboriginal population.

The *Inquiry into Redfern and Waterloo* in 2004 recognised the importance of Redfern to Aboriginal people and made many of its recommendations specifically on Aboriginal Issues and their interaction with the Government programmes in the area. Many others recommendations were equally applicable to Indigenous and non-Indigenous people as they apply to the provision of mainstream Government services to the whole community.

In this submission REDWatch will raise some general issues about Government involvement in Redfern Waterloo. Much of this relates across the community but it also impacts significantly upon Aboriginal people. If for example, Government does not have a robust process for discussing issues with the community this will impact even more on the Aboriginal community where literacy levels are lower and there is a cultural preference for face to face discussion rather than dealing in written reports and the preparation of written submissions.

The dispossessions of Aboriginal people creates unique problems that have to be addressed

While many aspects needed to overcome Indigenous disadvantage are similar to overcoming any form disadvantage, the committee has to remember that Indigenous disadvantage has a history of dispossession, of control and of repression which led to / created the loss of language, culture, identity and esteem. Recommendation 16 of the *Redfern and Waterloo Inquiry* proposed a commitment to a community healing strategy. This could well be a way of characterising the task of overcoming Indigenous disadvantage. How do you go about healing the results of 220 years of dispossession and demoralisation? How do you provide the confidence, the skills and experience for people who have had them denied or taken away? How do you heal the damage and reinstate to individuals and communities what has been denied to them over such a long time?

When the Settlement Neighbourhood Centre, which works with many of the youth from the Block, refused to make a submission to the RWA on its Draft Human Services Plan it was seen as being uncooperative and obstructive. The Settlement letter to the RWA, which is attached as Appendix 1, explained why the Settlement would not make a submission. The letter raises many of the issues which the RWA and your inquiry will need to address. It has to deal with justice and advocacy. It has to be about working with a diverse range of people and problems. It is about dealing with the effect of the 220 years of dispossession of everything held dear.

The *Redfern and Waterloo Inquiry* in its Interim and Final Reports made many recommendations about relations between the police and the Aboriginal community. This is a crucial area for this inquiry to investigate, not just because of the present extraordinarily high levels of Aboriginal incarceration and the problems this creates, but because of the historical role police have played in the dispossession of Aboriginal people. As the enforcers of past government policies Aboriginal communities grew up to distrust police and the system they represented. This legacy of distrust, which is not shared by any other group in Australia in the same way, has to be taken into account when dealing with Aboriginal Police relations.

This is the reason a police car chasing an Aboriginal teenager on a bike, police pulling a car over with an Aboriginal driver for a routine check or a strip search of an Aboriginal youth have much more significance and baggage within the Aboriginal community than there would be in the white community. It is crucial that police working with Aboriginal people have extensive training in racism issues and Aboriginal culture so that they do not perpetuate bad Aboriginal/ police relations into the future. After years of being on the receiving end of racism and abuse most Aboriginal people are well attuned to recognising racism, even if those who are accused of it are not aware that their actions could be interpreted as racist.

The Inquiry into Overcoming Indigenous Disadvantage must look closely at how the NSW Police Aboriginal Strategic Direction Policy is being implemented within a community like Redfern and try to understand Aboriginal concerns about the police treatment of Aboriginal people. Only a full opening up of these issues can start to address past practices and the history of distrust to throw light on how that history is perpetuated and the distrust of police passes on to subsequent generations. As part of this it has to address incarceration levels by helping offenders out of what too often has been a cycle of incarceration leading to further criminal activity.

Along side this; the Inquiry into Overcoming Indigenous Disadvantage will have to deal with the health impacts of loss of self identity and dispossession. It will have to deal with the high levels of drug and alcohol abuse and the domestic violence that often go with it. It is difficult to understand given the wide concern within the Aboriginal community as well as the broader community about domestic violence and child abuse why Mud-gin-gal, the Aboriginal Women's centre in Redfern, has had so much trouble in obtaining support for projects to address such issues in Redfern Waterloo. The contribution from the RWA of \$70,000 for In-home Family Support for Aboriginal Families barely scratches the surface of what needs to be done.

REDWatch has documented the Government and RWA's Activities in Redfern and Waterloo

REDWatch as well as, many individuals and organisations have written many papers and submissions about the RWA and its Plans. Much of this material is available on the REDWatch website at www.redwatch.org.au and we do not propose to repeat it here. The most recent analysis by REDWatch of the RWA and its activities was ***"An Agenda for Redfern Waterloo Changes in 2007"*** produced in March 2007 for the NSW State election. This analysis is still valid and we have attached this document as Appendix 2 for the Inquiry's easy reference.

We have also attached as Appendix 3 an article in the Indigenous Law Bulletin No 47 by REDWatch spokesperson Geoffrey Turnbull in August 2005 entitled ***"Actions Speak Louder than Words: Redfern-Waterloo's Recent Experience of 'Consultation'"***. This article documents the initial experience of the community, including the Aboriginal Housing Company, of the RWA's approach to Consultation.

REDWatch is happy to clarify for the committee any of the issues raised in these papers or in the rest of this submission.

For the remainder of this submission REDWatch wishes to bring to the attention of the Inquiry some of the recommendations for action from the *Redfern and Waterloo Inquiry* that have not been implemented by Government but which in our view should have been implemented.

The Missing Partnership in the Redfern Waterloo Project

The final chapter of the *Redfern and Waterloo Inquiry Report* dealt with the Future of Redfern Waterloo. Among the issues dealt with by the committee were: ***“Working with the non government sector and the community”*** and ***“community engagement”***. From these sections the Inquiry made Recommendation 36 which states: ***“That the NSW Government, through the Redfern Waterloo Partnership Project and the Redfern Waterloo Authority, take all possible steps to achieve genuine partnership between State and Commonwealth agencies, the City of Sydney Council, the non government sector and the local community in order to address the issues facing Redfern and Waterloo”***.

The absorption of the RWPP into the RWA marked the end of any notion of “partnership” involving the community and the non government sector. Promises made to the community about Community Engagement Proposals under the RED Strategy disappeared along with the RWPP Community Council and the promises of consultation made when the RWA Act was being negotiated through Parliament.

It was argued after the RWA was established that the area had been much studied and further consultation was not really required. It was seen by the RWA as more important to get plans drawn up rather than talk further with the community about the problems. There is of course some truth in this statement about the area being much studied but consultation is not just about identifying problems it is about testing what the reports found with the community to make sure that the problems are identified correctly and that plans and strategies adopted also cover community priorities and concerns.

The result of the RWA's approach was that Plans were drawn up with minimal community input, signed off by Government Departments and Cabinet before they were ever seen by the community. “Community consultation” effectively became the opportunity to make a written submission on the plan during its exhibition period. This is a long way from the Partnership approach the community expected it would receive.

In April 2005 after the RWA was set up the Minister promised: ***“A Community Forum to meet at least four times a year will be open for members of the public to attend. The purpose of this Forum is to provide the Minister with advice on the broad strategic direction of the Redfern-Waterloo Plan and provides the community with a direct link to the Minister.”*** (RWA's Redfern-Waterloo Plan #3, April 2005 – How Your Voice will be Heard) – Other than an early meeting specifically for Public Housing Tenants the Minister has never called or attended such a Community Forum in Redfern Waterloo. In the first six months of the RWA, the Minister did meet with members of local ALP branches but these also were seen as too problematic and ceased.

The only mechanism for ongoing community input, other than writing or ringing the RWA, is through the community positions on the three Ministerial Advisory Committees (MACs) which meet quarterly. Despite their name the Minister has never attended any MAC meetings and it is unclear how the Minister's chosen community representatives who sit with representatives of Government Departments on these Advisory committees can advise the Minister. The meetings are primarily updates about what the RWA has done in the last three months.

As mentioned above, the formal exhibition of plans is what is called “consultation” by the RWA. By contrast the City of Sydney in drawing its proposals, including its Development Control Plans which are similar to the RWA's Built Environment Plan, provides many opportunities for community input before a proposal goes to council and goes on public exhibition. There is a general community view that there is little use making submissions to the RWA as after the cabinet has already signing off on a plan there is little likelihood that new material will be included or proposals changed. REDWatch and others feel this view has been borne out with the lack of changes made to the RWA Plans exhibited to date.

In the early stages of the Human Services Plan preparation there were meetings of human service cluster groups to provide input, but many participants lost confidence in the Plan when their input and concerns were not reflected in the Draft Human Services Plan or the final version. In the case of the Built Environment Plan there was so much information missing from the exhibited Plan as well as conflicts between the Plan and the simultaneously exhibited SEPP that REDWatch asked for the Plan

to be withdrawn, fixed and then re-exhibited. In contrast the RWA's final Built Environment Plan included a lot of new material which had not previously been publicly exhibited because it was added in after the exhibition!

Final plans for Redfern Railway Station have been drawn up. Despite (at time of writing) the RWA website still saying that the RWA will "undertake community consultation on the resultant design options" no consultation has ever taken place. We are told the Station Design will not become public until after Government Funding has been agreed.

The RWA has had what it initially called a design competition for the concept plan for North Eveleigh. Based on this a firm was appointed to undertake the concept plan for North Eveleigh. If this concept plan follows the process that was used for Rachael Forster Hospital the community will not see the details of what the RWA propose for this part of our suburb until it appears on the Department of Planning Website with Director General's Requirements.

REDWatch has consistently expressed its desire to work with the RWA in a cooperative way but we have found ourselves characterised as opponents rather than partners. From our perspective the RWA has not taken "all possible steps to achieve genuine partnership" with "the non government sector and the local community in order to address the issues facing Redfern and Waterloo" as requested in Recommendation 36. This failure to genuinely engage the community has led to a lot of cynicism about the Government's and RWA's real interest in Redfern and Waterloo.

Improved Government Co-ordination?

The RWPP and the RWA held out the promise that they could get Government Departments and non government organisations together to seriously tackle the area's problems. In the Government announcement ***"The Minister responsible for the Redfern-Waterloo Authority will coordinate all State Government funding within the area."*** The *Redfern and Waterloo Inquiry* Recommendation 30 was that ***"That the NSW Government ensure that the Redfern Waterloo Partnership Project, or a similar coordinating body, is extended beyond 2008, is adequately resourced, with appropriate performance measurement, so that the long term social disadvantage in Redfern and Waterloo can be addressed."***

In the case of the Human Services Plan (Phase 1) initially there was some reason to believe that there has been some improved co-operation between departments at policy level. The Plan covers a range of Human Services delivered by a number of departments and it allocates responsibility for delivery and co-ordination to various departments. Encouragingly, given the Morgan Disney focus on NGOs, the first part of the Human Services Plan recognised that Government Agencies needed to improve the delivery of their services and that they needed to put in place proposals for early intervention to address the area's problems.

Against the advice of Recommendation 9 of the *Redfern and Waterloo Inquiry* the RWA has made no request for additional funding to cover the additional cost of early intervention strategies. The community and NGOs have been told repeatedly that individual Government Departments are expected to find the increased resources from other activities within their existing departmental budget. Similar pressures have also now been placed on department budgets by the NSW State Plan which expects implementation to be made within existing budgets. Early intervention strategies require initial additional funding as existing services need to be maintained until the results of early intervention work their way through the system. In the long term early intervention will save on service delivery later, but if the extra money is not available to introduce early intervention it is difficult to see how the RWA Human Service Plan can be implemented.

REDWatch is unaware of any Human Service Review of Government Core activities being undertaken as covered by *Redfern and Waterloo Inquiry* Recommendations 7 and 23. REDWatch is also unaware of any audit of Government assets in Redfern Waterloo as requested by Recommendation 25. No report was made publicly available as requested by the recommendation. We agree with the recommendation that such a review should have been undertaken and the results made public to compliment the Morgan Disney Review.

Such information would have been crucial had the RWA adopted *Redfern and Waterloo Inquiry* Recommendation 32 which requested ***"That the NSW Government, through the Redfern Waterloo Authority and the Redfern Waterloo Partnership Project, establish short, medium and long term strategic objectives for the area and key outcomes associated with those objectives. In***

addition, the Government's performance against these objectives should be regularly reviewed and reported to the public."

No short, medium or long term objectives were established by the RWA. While the City of Sydney is looking at planning out to 2030, the RWA has not assessed what government services may be required in the area after the residential and working population is increased to the levels sought by the Government. REDWatch and others have argued that Government land should not be disposed of until there was a study undertaken of what public domain and services were required for the area in the future. On the sale of the school site REDWatch was told that if the Government needed space for a new school in 25 years then it would have to go into the market and buy the land for it. This lack of long term planning smacks more of a Government and Authority looking for short term gains than of any genuine attempt at long term strategic planning for the area.

Coordination between Government Departments on the ground has been even more difficult to obtain. Recommendation 20 of The *Redfern and Waterloo Inquiry* was **"That the Department of Housing continue to seek ways to address tenant concerns in relation to maintenance, the physical environment of the estate, estate and tenant management, and security and safety."** Redfern Police recently undertook a Safety Audit of Waterloo Green. The audit found that inadequate maintenance by the Department of Housing was a major contributor to the poor safety on the Waterloo Green, which is Departmental land. While the RWA has facilitated a response to the Safety Audit local residents are concerned that little has happened and that the Department's duty of care is still not being properly exercised. The major concern is that if such issues can not be addressed on existing Department properties what is the likelihood that such issues will be better addressed following the RWA and Housing NSW's proposed renewal of public housing stock.

The Morgan Disney report on Redfern and Waterloo Human Services, which focused primarily on NGOs, set expectation that there was enough money already in the area. It expected to find savings by streamlining the way existing services operated which could be used to meet un-met needs in the area. Much of the Morgan Disney report is now widely dismissed and the RWA has been unable to find the savings expected by rationalising services and service providers. However what has eventuated is that while no savings have been found to be re-directed towards un-met need, neither has any new funding been forthcoming.

Non government agencies pointing out areas where funding is desperately needed to meet unmet need have repeatedly been told by RWA Human Services staff that there is no additional government funding for human services in the area. This creates an intolerable situation for service providers whose staff see needs increasing within the community, due in part to older and higher needs public tenants, but have no access to increased resources to address the needs. They are left in the invidious situation of not being able to accommodate new service users as they are already running at full capacity unless there is additional funding.

The *Inquiry into Redfern and Waterloo* also recognised the importance for the Government to be involved in capacity building within the Aboriginal (Interim Recommendation 3) and NGO communities (Recommendation 11). These important recommendations have not been undertaken by Government at the level required. During the preparation of the Human Service Plans NGOs, both Indigenous and non-indigenous, were expected to put time, for which they were not funded, into attending meetings and providing input to the RWA. There was considerable resentment that no resources were made available for this activity which was not funded by existing NGO funding agreements and took time from funded programmes. These concerns were compounded when the final plans came out and NGO's found little of their input reflected in the final documents and felt their time had been totally wasted.

One of the issues in capacity building is that resources are needed for staff and committee training and development especially in NGOs that rely heavily on volunteer management committees. Because of funding constraints they also often have to employ relatively inexperienced staff who have greater training needs and require additional support. Good NGO Aboriginal staff are often enticed into better paying government jobs leaving NGOs to train up new Aboriginal staff and to deal with issues faced by inexperienced staff without any additional support. Most community organisations go through problem patches with staff or committees and capacity building to minimise such problems and to assist organisations through those periods can minimise these problems.

Another significant Recommendation which has also not been implemented is Inquiry Recommendation 22 which proposed **"a community development strategy for the area, the primary focus of which is on community members and groups. The strategy should include provision for a small grants scheme to fund local community development activities"**. What

many of us understand as community development seems very much out of vogue in Government circles including the RWA. The fear seems to be that active community groups who are taking an interest in their communities and what happens to them create potential problems for government and should not be encouraged. If you need proof of this look at the way in which the website "*Community Engagement in the NSW Planning System*" has gone from winning Planning awards in 2004 for best practice to now when the site is no longer being maintained or part of the mainstream Department of Planning website (currently <http://203.147.162.100/pia/engagement/index.htm>).

The changes in the way the Government approaches planning are reflected in the way the RWA deals with the local community. REDWatch for example has been refused a link on the RWA site on the basis that we are political in a way that the Redfern Waterloo Chamber of Commerce and service providers are not! By contrast the City of Sydney maintains links to residents groups and Chambers of Commerce on their website.

One of the main problems for the RWA is that proper community engagement and capacity building, like early intervention, is a time consuming and expensive process and the return on investment is not immediate. The RWA has been in a hurry to be seen to deliver. With no real commitment to a robust community engagement process in developing its plans, resources were not made available to fund a proper community engagement process. The result is that "consultation" has become limited to the opportunity to make a submission on a plan or development proposal during the exhibition phase rather than an opportunity for community involvement in the development of the proposals in the first place.

Recommendation 13 of the *Redfern and Waterloo Inquiry* called for the reinstatement of the Youth Taskforce with a membership of Government and non government providers. Recommendations 14 and 15 dealt with improved youth facilities and provision of weekend programmes. Little has happened in this area. The Fact tree still occupies the same premises. After an initial flurry of activity to reorganise Youth Services in line with the RWA's Human Services Plan the Youth Taskforce has effectively stopped meeting and services continue to operate out of substandard premises. Funds have not been made available to expand operating hours. There are some prospects of improved facilities in a 1 to four year time span depending on funding being found but Human Services are largely on their own in finding suitable accommodation as services removed from the old Redfern School found out when it was being prepared for sale.

The demise of the Redfern Waterloo Street Team (RWST) has seen the Government quit service delivery in this sector apart from programmes run in association with Alexandria Park Community School. It was initially expected that the balance of the RWST funding would be allocated to local Youth Services programmes but this did not eventuate.

Currently the RWPP money is due to run out in mid 2008 and the indications are that the RWA will essentially quit the RWPP Human Services role it took over and leave that role to Human Service Agencies in co-ordination with the RWA.

Lack of Transparency

The final chapter of the *Inquiry into Redfern and Waterloo* also dealt with the need for transparency. This also continued to be a problem under the RWA. While the RWA makes available the component parts of The Redfern Waterloo Plan, other important documents including "accountability measures" covered by Recommendation 35 are not made publicly available.

The RWA drew up a set of Human Services Evaluation Framework and Performance Indicators in June 2006 and REDWatch has a "final draft" of these documents on its website but the final documents are not available on the RWA website. Helen Campbell from Redfern Legal Service served as a NGO representative on HSMAC until her term was not extended and the NGO representative position was dropped. She told REDWatch last year that as of mid 2007 the Departments had yet to establish common base line data for assessment of the Human Service Plan. This was at the time when the 18 month assessment of the Human Services Plan was due.

It is impossible for those outside the RWA to assess if the various plans are being implemented and if they are having the expected effect. There are public Human Services and Employment and Enterprise Plans but no public basis for assessing their implementation other than general statement praising their work from within the RWA itself.

The RWA Annual Report shows it is making sizable grants to various organisations but this is the only information available to the community, there are no public grant guidelines, selection processes or evaluation guidelines. In a recent Estimates hearing in answer to a question about per capita funding levels the Minister said **“Our main emphasis in Redfern is opportunities for people, rather than cash handouts. We do not do cash handouts.”** (15 October 2007) and yet the RWA's 2006-07 Annual report shows them making Sponsorship and Grant payments of \$827,166.25. Surely there has to be some reporting on the effectiveness of this funding and how it compares with the service delivery of agencies like DoCs who normally handle such project funding.

The *Redfern and Waterloo Inquiry* Recommendation 31 said: **“That the NSW Government, through the Redfern Waterloo Authority and the Redfern Waterloo Partnership Project, ensure that the Redfern Waterloo Plan and the Human Services Plan contain an appropriate set of indicators and performance measurements by which the objectives of the Plans can be assessed. In addition, the Plans should be made publicly available; and regular evaluation and review should be undertaken and made public”**. Clearly regular evaluation and review, if they are being undertaken, are not being made public as recommended by the *Redfern and Waterloo Inquiry*. This Inquiry should ask the RWA to make public all evaluations and reviews.

With most RWA documents going to cabinet subcommittees it has been easy for the RWA to deny access on the basis that the document is a cabinet document. The original RED Strategy documents were denied release on this basis as has the evaluation report of the Redfern Waterloo Street Team (RWST). From what has been leaked to the media about the RWST evaluation report the main objective of not releasing this report seems to have been to avoid the embarrassment that this highly talked up government land mark programme had major problems (see government submission to the *Redfern and Waterloo Inquiry* as an example).

The importance of the RWST document to Redfern Waterloo is two fold. Firstly Youth Services were told that proposals in the Human Services Plan for way they were to be reorganised was based on what the government learnt from the evaluation of RWST, but without the RWST Evaluation release they are being deigned information that would help them to assess how it might be possible to improve their services. Secondly, according to media reports the main problem with the RWST was that it was set up by Government who thought they could deliver an on the ground service better than those that had worked in the area with youth for a long time. The effect was to make the situation worse. This attitude that Government knows best and we can't learn anything from the local NGOs perpetuates itself in the RWA and increases the likelihood that similar problems will reoccur. We have attached the two media articles referred to for ready reference by the committee as Appendix 4 – Redfern plan backfires: report – SMH 20 Oct 2007 and Appendix 5 – FOI Controversy over street team – UTS Precinct South 4/2007.

Among the many Conflicts of Interest the RWA has is that it is responsible for promoting the area and increasing property values on Government Land as well as running programmes in the area. What the RWA publishes on its website and in its Newsletters and Annual Report seem designed to help promote and sell Redfern Waterloo rather than anything which allows their activities to be critically evaluated by the community.

It should come as no surprise then that Inquiry recommendation 28 that the Government should **“ensure that all future commercial or residential development applications of scale are subject to a comprehensive social impact assessment process”** has also not been adopted by the RWA and the Government.

Much has been written by the RWA about its Aboriginal training programmes but there is no public information available which allows these programmes to be assessed; either in terms of the employment effect, the proportion of Redfern and Waterloo people who are part of the training, or what, if anything, is being done to assist those with no culture of work prepare themselves to take up a training opportunity and making a successful transition to employment.

The RWA did commission a study on **“Creating a Culture of Work in the Redfern Waterloo Area”** which, while it does not appear on the RWA website, was released to REDWatch and is on our website. While there have been questions raised about aspects of the report, it does open up some important areas for further discussion and action. There is no publicly available information about what the RWA is doing to address the important but difficult problems of those with no personal or family work culture. The only public reference to this work on the RWA website disappeared recently.

One of REDWatch's concerns about the RWA's Aboriginal Employment and Enterprise activities is that they seem to be providing training opportunities for people outside the area rather than focusing

on the difficult end of the employment market where lack of work culture, criminal histories or substance abuse make the transition from unemployment to employment a long and almost impossible process for many Aboriginal people alienated from the “whitefella’s” system.

Conclusion

REDWatch agrees with the Redfern and Waterloo Final Recommendation that ***“That the NSW Government take the lead in encouraging all political parties and independents to adopt an ongoing commitment to Indigenous issues and work cooperatively with the Aboriginal community to address the serious social disadvantage affecting Aboriginal people.”***

Your current Inquiry is about this very thing but it has to have practical manifestations in the way the Government goes about things and have recommendations it makes implemented. Aboriginal people lived for a long time under the Mission Managers and in many respects Government still behaves this way towards the disadvantaged including the Aboriginal community. Government, and its Departments and Authorities, have to show respect for Aboriginal people and find ways of genuinely listening to their experience of the systems and then work with them to find ways to improving the systems to solve the underlying problems that give rise to many of the issues faced by the Aboriginal community.

Many in Redfern and Waterloo are disappointed that the opportunity for change held out by the Government’s intervention in Redfern Waterloo has been squandered. Where there was an opportunity to get Government Departments’ working together to address the area’s problems we have instead some high profile Aboriginal employment initiatives within the construction industry linked to the area’s real estate renewal and no real indication that the social issues will be addressed. In the end the community fear that we may end up with an even more polarised community as new residents come into a more Manhattanised Redfern and Waterloo and live in close proximity to higher needs public housing tenants who continue to deal with a non integrated human services system that doesn’t address their problems which require intervention from multiple agencies.

REDWatch encourages the Legislative Council Council’s Standing Committee on Social Issues Inquiry into Closing the Gap – Overcoming Indigenous Disadvantage to look at the practicalities of what needs to happen to overcome Indigenous disadvantage in a complex inner city urban area like Redfern Waterloo. If solutions that will work within our community can be found then in all likelihood they will be transferable in large part else where and to other marginalised groups.

The current issues facing Redfern Waterloo are not just Aboriginal Issues. There are a large number of non-Aboriginal people, in public housing, who share a very similar experience of government services and like the Aboriginal Community are among the marginalised in our community. On the other side there are the new inner city renters and landowners who come to the area because of its proximity to the city, work and entertainment as it gentrifies. They have pushed out almost all low income private renters but are often unaware of the challenges of living side by side with the high needs people in the area’s public housing. They too need the human services systems to do their job and for Government to seriously address issues of disadvantage and inequality or the increasing polarisation of the community may lead to future incidents of conflict within the community.

If Government can not find workable solutions to address such problems in Redfern Waterloo then the well meaning Recommendations from this current Inquiry will join those from the earlier *Redfern and Waterloo Inquiry* and gather dust with the numerous other studies into Aboriginal and Redfern Waterloo social issues that have been undertaken over decades. The challenge for Government is to address the underlying issues which are the only way to lead to lasting change. To do this Government has to listen to the marginalised and their communities and make long term commitments to working in partnership with communities to overcome disadvantage. This is especially so in addressing Indigenous disadvantage.

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31st January 2008

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Appendices Attached

Appendix 1 – Settlement Letter to RWA of 9 March 2006 over RWA HSP Submission

Appendix 2 – An Agenda for Redfern Waterloo Changes in 2007

Appendix 3 – Actions Speak Louder than Words: Redfern-Waterloo's Recent Experience of
'Consultation' ILB 47

Appendix 4 – Redfern plan backfires: report – SMH 20 Oct 2007

Appendix 5 – FOI Controversy over street team – UTS Precinct South 4/2007



THE SETTLEMENT

NEIGHBOURHOOD CENTRE

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'Celebrating our 80th year in Edward St'

9 March 2006

Mr Aldo Pennini,
Director Reforming Human Services
Redfern Waterloo Authority

Dear Aldo,

The Settlement Neighbourhood Centre will not be providing a detailed submission on the Draft Human Services Plan for the following reasons:

1. The time frame for responses is inappropriate for democratic organisations, especially those, like the Settlement, which have volunteer management committees. Government agencies dealing with NGO's should begin by respecting their work and governance structures, rather than allowing themselves unlimited time and expertise to prepare reports, leaving none for preparation of responses.
2. The Draft Plan wrongly confines its attention and language to the "efficient" provision of "services". The Settlement takes an altogether broader view, which recognizes the importance of services, but also the social and physical landscape of our district, and its vibrant mix of communities. We also see:
 - communities and groups which are sites of historical and cultural identity;
 - communities and groups which are capable, self-determining, autonomous yet collaborative;
 - communities and groups which are sites of dissent and resistance.
3. When we talk about Redfern-Waterloo we are not merely talking about best ways of delivering commodities ("services") in a market place, we are talking about challenging and transforming the context for the benefit of all. The Settlement supports a society of social justice, and we expect from the RWA a serious challenge to the privileging arrangements which run along lines of race, class, wealth, gender,

age, disability and sexual orientation, and which result in the present inequalities in health, housing, education, employment, law.

4. The Plan leaps to the conclusion, uncritically and resting unsoundly on one research document (which also confines itself to the language of “services”), that “integration of services” will produce improvements. There is almost no examination of the value of diverse provision in a diverse and changing community, and no examination of unifying strategies that are not based on location – alternatives to the precinct model.
5. We have been told that no substantial changes will be made to the Report. Dropping everything to respond to the major defects of this Plan when we know none will be rectified is hardly good time management
6. We have been told that the end result of the implementation of this Plan will be the “better management” of around \$2million per year, the majority of which comes from the disbandment of the Street Team. Even if major benefits could derive from this restructure, the percentage gain in dollars or services will be infinitesimal in comparison with unmet need in our area. We are better off, in our view, getting on with the job in hand than responding to a Plan with such paltry intent.
7. In our view this Draft Plan should have commenced with an objective assessment of the immense unmet need in our area, and a frank admission by Government of the extent of its ability to meet it. Instead, the Plan consists of the compulsory “restructure” of services delivered by NGO’s, the goodwill and volunteer effort of which the Government relies on, and vague, motherhood-style statements of intent by government agencies that have no new funds, staff or facilities to implement them, or publicly accountable reporting.
8. The Plan is a band-aid over a gaping wound at best, scapegoating of the hard-pressed volunteer sector at worst. We expected better after all the hype produced to justify the passage of the Redfern Waterloo Authority Bill.

The Settlement has a century-long tradition of both independence and cooperation. We will work with any government or non-government agency to improve services to the disadvantaged of our area. We will support changes to the organisation of service delivery where they can be proved to bring genuine improvement. But we will oppose any moves to “rationalise” services when this means loss of the ability to design and get funding for tailored programs for particular (sometimes quite small) groups. We will work against “one stop shops” where that means “one size fits all”. We will continue to assert that the RWA has been given immense powers to improve the life opportunities of people living in some of the greatest concentrations of disadvantage in the country, and has so far failed to produce a Plan capable of making more than a cosmetic difference.

Yours truly,

Lyn Turnbull, Secretary,
The Settlement Management Committee

An Agenda for Redfern Waterloo Changes in 2007 State Election Issues

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REDWatch is a residents and friends group covering Redfern Eveleigh Darlington and Waterloo (the same area covered by the Redfern Waterloo Authority). REDWatch monitors the activities of government activities such as the RWA and RWPP and seek to ensure community involvement in all decisions made about the area.

This policy document has been adopted by a REDWatch General Meeting on 14th February 2007 for use on the REDWatch website and for distribution in the lead up to the 2007 NSW Election.

Enquiries concerning this document and any other REDWatch activities concerning the election should be referred to REDWatch Spokesperson Geoffrey Turnbull whose contacts are at the end of this document.

Why we should reassess government activities

The Redfern Waterloo Authority (RWA) was established in December 2004 by an Act of NSW Parliament. The Bill was introduced by the Labor Government and was passed with the support of the Liberal Opposition following some amendments in the upper house by the Liberals, the Greens and the Cross benchers and the government. The 2007 State Election will be the first election to be held since the RWA was established and hence it is an opportune time to question political parties and candidates about what they have done in the past parliamentary term about Redfern Waterloo and what new policies they propose to address the concerns of those that live in the area.

While the operation of the RWA is governed by an Act of Parliament, the Act gives the Minister for Redfern Waterloo, currently Frank Sartor, immense powers over how the RWA operates. The Minister decides who will be on the RWA Board, what consultation and advisory committees will exist and who will be on them. The Minister also decides what will be and will not be in the Redfern Waterloo Plan and how it will be put together. A new Minister could make the RWA operate a very different way and could address many of the concerns REDWatch have detailed in this paper. When REDWatch lobbied Minister Sartor in 2004 over the RWA Bill, the Minister said that he hoped he would have the RWA bedded down so well that no Minister following him would want to change things. The RWA of 2007 is very much a product of its first Minister, and it remains to be seen if his successors will want to change what he has put in place. The 2007 NSW State election holds the possibility of a change of Minister for Redfern Waterloo, either through change of Government or Ministerial reshuffle. There are a number of things REDWatch would want to see a new Minister change.

The Redfern Waterloo Authority (RWA) has now been in operation for over two years. It has established its operational processes, published most of its plans and it is now embarking on the implementation of the plans. The RWA has argued that there had been lots of studies and reports about Redfern Waterloo and that the important thing for the RWA was to get its plans out and start doing something. At the RWA's inception REDWatch was told to wait until all the RWA plans were finalised before you criticise us. With two years' worth of Plans and community experience of the RWA, 2007 is an opportune time to look at how the RWA's activities can be improved.

REDWatch's membership is made of people not affiliated with any party as well as people involved with all major political parties. REDWatch does not support any political party. REDWatch does encourage residents to be actively involved in all aspects of their community life including politics. REDWatch wants to see policies from all political parties that seriously address the needs, concerns and aspirations of those that live and work in Redfern, Eveleigh, Darlington and Waterloo - the suburbs generally referred to as Redfern-Waterloo.

Ideally REDWatch would like to see a non-partisan approach by political parties to work with the communities that live in Redfern Waterloo to find lasting solutions to the areas issues.

Below we have highlighted some of the issues of concern to the community that can be addressed by either changes in Government Policy or by the way the Minister for Redfern Waterloo and the RWA implements the Redfern Waterloo Act. The following outline may assist people wanting to raise these issues with political parties and candidates during the 2007 NSW election.

Failings in Community Consultation and Engagement

The NSW Government has taken control of parts of Redfern Waterloo away from a democratically elected local council and handed control of these areas to a state minister. In addition the Minister for Redfern Waterloo was appointed to be responsible for co-ordinating all state government decisions concerning the area. A substantial amount of power and responsibility was vested with the Minister. The availability of opportunities for the community to discuss their concerns with the Minister and to have input to the decisions was of major concern to the community from the outset and was the topic of the Minister's first communication with the community. In April 2005 the RWA advised the community "How Your Voice Will be Heard" through its newsletter announcing the Minister's decision. The newsletter explained the "Community Consultation Framework" as having three elements linking the community to the Minister: Community Forums, Ministerial Advisory Committees and RWA Working Groups. What was proposed was not necessarily what was delivered.

No Promised Community Forums have been Held

The direct link between the community and the Minister the newsletter said was *"A Community Forum to meet at least four times a year will be open for members of the public to attend. The purpose of this Forum is to provide the Minister with advice on the broad strategic direction of the Redfern-Waterloo Plan and provides the community with a direct link to the Minister"*. The Minister has never implemented this undertaking. The only Redfern Waterloo public meeting attended by the Minister since his appointment as Minister for Redfern Waterloo was held specifically for public housing tenants. While the RWA have held a couple of community meetings the meetings have not been attended by the Minister nor have they performed the functions the Minister promised for Community Forums.

Ministerial Advisory Committees that have never seen the Minister

The Minister proposed three Ministerial Advisory Committees (MACs) made up of an equal number of representatives from government departments and the community to advise the Minister. The community representatives were appointed by the Minister and some concern was expressed about how representative of the community those appointed were, especially as some also worked for the state government. While there have been a number of meetings of each of the MACs, to the best of our knowledge the Minister has never attended any MAC meeting. All meetings are chaired by an RWA employee or Board Member, who may brief the Minister or provide his staff with minutes, but either way this provides a very filtered perspective of any issues of concern raised by community representatives. [Due to the RWA's role in implementing Government policy in Redfern Waterloo there is usually much greater knowledge about what is being planned behind the scene from the government MAC members. They are often involved in preparing policy documents or involved with or aware of cabinet, CEO, Senior Officer and other inter-departmental discussions to which the community representatives are not privy.] The MACs have provided very limited opportunity for community input and acted more as a sounding board for the RWA and Government on their agenda.

RWA Working Groups without community representation

According to the Minister's April 2005 consultation diagram, the MACs were to directly advise the Minister while Working Groups were to advise the Minister through the RWA. The Working Groups do not necessarily include representatives of the community. Human Service providers are concerned that many of the decisions about human services in the area have overlooked important local needs because the decisions are primarily being driven by representatives of government departments and the local experience is being excluded or when expressed it has not been listened to. REDWatch considers that all Working Groups should include at least two community representation with relevant experience who have links to a local community group or service provider.

The Missing Community Council

Under the RWA's predecessor, the Redfern Waterloo Partnership Project (RWPP), the NSW Premier's Department operated a Community Council. The Community Council was made up of elected representatives (local MPs and councillors) and state government selected representatives from some the sectors of the community. While some voiced concerns about the make up of the Community Council and the way it was selectively used by the RWPP, the Council potentially provided a broad representative community body to dialogue with government about the changes proposed. While REDWatch pushed for a similar community council under the RWA, the proposal was not accepted by the Minister. REDWatch hopes the Minister will commit to establishing a broad based Community Council to advise the RWA and the Minister across the range of the RWA's activities after the election.

Inquiry Concerns about Community Engagement remain

The Redfern Waterloo Partnership Project came in for significant criticism in late 2004 from the Legislative Council's Inquiry into Redfern Waterloo. The Inquiry found that the Government needed to substantially improve their Community Engagement processes. REDWatch initially welcomed the RWA proposal for a Minister who could be held politically responsible for Redfern Waterloo. Since the establishment of the RWA the concept of partnership with the community and other tiers of government has been dropped from the state government's programme for Redfern Waterloo, leading much less engagement with the community. This is in contrast to the Upper House Committee's findings that the government should improve its community engagement processes.

Encouraging Community Based Planning

The decision by the NSW Government to switch from the RED Strategy's proposal for Council controlled redevelopment of Redfern Waterloo to a state government controlled Redfern Waterloo Authority indicates a State Government view that State Significant developments and the increased densities required to accommodate population increases across Sydney can not be handled by Local Councils and

local communities. This position has manifested in various forms as the Minister for Planning has called in other major projects such as the CUB site.

REDWatch does not accept the “all communities are anti-development” argument. Experience in both Australia (eg North Sydney) and in the USA (eg Seattle) show that communities will accept city wide growth targets and even, as is the case in Seattle, agree to plans for increased densities. Communities however want a say in where growth is best placed and how it is best handled to maintain important community space and local amenity. REDWatch has often been painted as being anti-development and yet in May 2005 REDWatch proposed to the RWA a process for a community driven planning framework for developing the Redfern Waterloo Plan required under the RWA’s Act. REDWatch does not oppose development in Redfern Waterloo; our argument with the RWA has been about process. Of course not having had input into the formulation of the RWA Plans has meant that REDWatch and other community groups have focused on the short comings of the plans.

Community Consultations in Developing Plans

REDWatch and many other groups and agencies in the area have been concerned about the RWA’s failure to listen to the variety of voices in the local community and find ways to incorporate the community as partners in the decisions made about the area’s future. The RWA has instead formulated Plans that have often already been signed off on by government departments and cabinet before they are shown to the community for comment. As a result little of substance changes and community insights and input are denied. This was especially so in the Human Services Plan and the Employment & Enterprise Plan.

This “development exhibition” style is not robust consultation as it fails to involve the community in the formulation of the plans and the only provides the opportunity to a comment on the draft plan. In the case of the RWA Built Environment Plan there were a large number of changes following public exhibition. In large part these changes resulted directly from the RWA rushing its formulation of the draft plan and not doing the work that should have been done before its release. The final Built Environment Plan hence included a significant amount of new material which the community had no opportunity to make any comment upon at all.

In contrast the City of Sydney has undertaken a number of consultations concerning their planning responsibilities in Redfern Waterloo in the last year. These have involved opportunities for input to consultants and council officers prior to the preparation of plans in addition to the “development exhibition” consultation phase. There usually has been a lot of community input into the plan or review before it goes out on exhibition. REDWatch is of the view that the City of Sydney approach to consultation sees the formulation of better decisions as well as greater community acceptance of the decisions made when compared to the process used to date by the RWA. We note that the City recently hosted a talk on the Seattle approach to community involvement in planning and that the City may move further towards facilitating more community level planning. The City’s direction is similar to the process proposed to the RWA by REDWatch in May 2005.

Dialogue Experience with the RWA

REDWatch has held a number of meetings with either Robert Domm, the RWA CEO, or with RWA Human Services staff. REDWatch is pleased that the RWA has always been prepared to accept REDWatch invitations and explain their current plans. These discussions have always been informative about the RWA’s plans and some of the thinking behind them. Regrettably the meetings have seldom seen any of the concerns raised at the meetings taken up by the RWA as issues that need to be investigated or taken into account in the RWA plans. The impression is very much that community concerns are not on the RWA agenda which is being driven almost only by the NSW Government and Department agendas. Many local service providers and other groups, including Gary Moore who as Director of New South Wales Council of Social Services (NCOSS) co-chaired the RWA’s Human Services MAC, have raised similar concerns.

The Need for a Shared Vision

When the RWA Legislation was introduced the Bill didn’t include Objects. The inclusion of general Objects was one of a number of changes REDWatch managed to have changed in the Bill. REDWatch has argued in our submission on the RWA Built Environment Plan that when the RWA combines their various Plans into a single Redfern Waterloo Plan they also need to incorporate a vision statement of what the Plan seeks to achieve. Without this we can end up with activity but no clear vision of where the RWA is heading. REDWatch does not want to see another “motherhood” statement incorporated as the vision for the RWA. REDWatch believes that the RWA should use the opportunity provided by the need to develop a vision statement to consult broadly with the community and to develop a vision that is shared between the communities that make up Redfern Waterloo and the Government. Some elements of what

might be in this vision statement can be found in some of the RED Strategy documents which resulted from a brief earlier consultation with the community.

The Challenge of Working Together

When the Redfern Waterloo Partnership Project was disbanded, the concept of partnership with the community was dropped from the Government lexicon. It is not clear if this was a consequence of the Minister chosen to establish the RWA, if it was a change of Government policy or just a smart way getting around the Inquiry into Redfern Waterloo's criticism of the government for not actively engaging the community. Whatever the reason it is opportune to call again for a Partnership between the Government and the various communities of Redfern and Waterloo.

With most of the RWA's Plans now public, and with the RWA entering the implementation phase, it is time to re-visit the concept of partnership. We largely know now what the Government wants from its involvement in Redfern Waterloo. It is now time for the Minister and the RWA to listen to what the various parts of the community want and to see if both can be achieved in some way. To do this there is a need to build a new partnership between the community and the RWA.

There is no reason for those that question or are critical of the RWA to be cut out of the process. They are after all those who are interested in what happens in their community and they are prepared to voice their concerns. It does not mean that the RWA should do what the loudest talkers say but that the Minister and the RWA need to find ways of listening to the broad range of community concerns and find ways of working with the community to address those concerns. The Minister and the RWA need to work at building a genuine partnership with the community which is aimed at ensuring that the existing Redfern Waterloo communities get the maximum benefit from the RWA and the government's involvement in Redfern Waterloo.

Information Flows and Transparency

Information Dissemination and Control

The RWA have a well established website (although still without a working search function) and the RWA has producing a reasonable number of newsletters through which they seek to inform the community about the RWA's achievements, activities and the material on public exhibition. The RWA have however not always resisted the temptation to use the Newsletters to 'spin' their position on Redfern Waterloo. Who can forget the RWA Update issue with the Open Letter from the Minister to Mick Mundine at the height of the RWA – AHC standoff over the Block as an example?

The Minister's media management also includes a policy of not inviting local media, community leaders or key information disseminators to public launches and media conferences related to Redfern Waterloo. While this might avoid the Minister being asked difficult questions by people who have local knowledge it also means that RWA / Government stories which have not been picked up by mainstream media do not readily get out to the local community in a timely manner.

While the Local Council engages with local residents groups as well as local Chambers of Commerce, the RWA has incorporated into its Built Environment Plan only involvement with the Redfern Waterloo Chamber of Commerce (RWCC). While the City of Sydney has links to Chambers of Commerce and Residents Groups on their web site the RWA only links to the RWCC and has no links to residents groups. A request for a link from the RWA website to the REDWatch site has been declined on the basis that REDWatch is political. This is despite the fact that the REDWatch website has carried, at the RWA request, Human Services Consultation documents not carried by the RWA's own website.

While it is common for Government organisations to manage the media it can also further distance the Authority from the very community it supposedly exists to service. The RWA needs to find ways to actively engage with community organisations including residents groups rather than turn them in to their opponents.

The need for transparency

Under Local Government there is a level of transparency and opportunity for involvement in decision making which has been lost currently under the RWA. With Council, meeting dates for committees and council are known in advance, as are the agendas and the minutes detailing what has been decided. If there is an issue of concern on the agenda those interested can contact council officers, councillors and address committee meetings. None of this is possible with the way the RWA has been established by the Minister. While in Council sensitive matters can be considered in camera, in the RWA everything is conducted away from public view and only becomes public if thought worthy of mention in a newsletter or

on the website or it is mentioned in conversation by RWA staff. REDWatch is of the view that the RWA should conduct its activities in a transparent manner similar to local council.

RWA Board, committee meeting and Ministerial Advisory Committee dates and agendas should be publicly posted on the RWA website so people know when meetings are being held and what is being considered. Minutes of such meetings should also be publicly posted as should Ministerial Decisions and Delegations. There is probably also a case for Board and committee meetings being open for the public to attend. After all even a council administrator conducts meetings in public.

Under Council, Development Applications (DAs) that receive significant opposition are usually dealt with by Council Committee at which proponent and objectors can speak. Currently the RWA deals with all DAs under delegation and there are no mechanisms for objectors to verbally put their case. Council also make available, in council officers' reports, details of submissions received on a matter under consideration by Council. This transparency is important for those concerned about an altered decision to understand why changes have been made. While the RWA has released some submissions on its Human Services Plans, the RWA has not released submissions on the Employment & Enterprise Plan or the Built Environment Plan, or any of the DAs the RWA has handled.

REDWatch accepts that, as is the case with some council decisions, some market sensitive material needs to be kept confidential. The existence of such material should not prevent meeting times, agendas and minutes being made publicly available as is the case for Councils.

Government must adequately Fund Redfern Waterloo

RWA Sales Pay for State rather than Local Capital Works

The RWA was initially set up as a self funding authority although two years down the track it seems to have been recognised that, initially at least, the RWA will not be able to operate without some additional government funds. It is still of concern however that rather than spending funds from developments in the area on improving local infrastructure, the sale of land and developer contributions are planned to be used to re-develop Redfern Railway Station or to try and address the problems caused by the arterial roads near Redfern Railway station. While the Town Hall station upgrade is coming from the State Works Budget, the RWA is expected to pay for most of the cost of an upgrade of Redfern Station by the sale of development approved Government owned land in the RWA area. The proposed RWA Works budget only proposes only \$1.2 million for new community facilities for the 18,000 extra people working in the area and for the 2,000 extra residents proposed. By contrast over \$15 million in the proposed RWA Works Budget is earmarked to lessen the impact of the state's arterial roads on access to Redfern Railway Station. At the same time existing human services can not service the existing population let alone the proposed increase and a major issue is for community services to have adequate accommodation to operate their services.

Yes Premier - More Money is Needed to Provide Human Services

One of the most frustrating government policies impacting on Redfern Waterloo is the Government decision imposed on the RWA that there will be no new human services funding for Redfern Waterloo. The expectation was that the RWA would reform human services and that a more efficient organisation of service providers and programmes would release funds for new initiatives. This logic has been found to be flawed. The upshot has been that RWA staff have to continually say that no extra money is available to service providers even though there is a clear and demonstrate need for new funding if the RWA Human Services Plans are to work. This is an area that must be taken up during the election campaign with the government and the opposition parties. It is simply not possible to address the high needs of the area adequately with existing funding. While this policy remains in place it makes a mockery of any suggestion that the RWA is developing a viable Human Services Plan for the area. While this government policy continues in operation the RWA should at least document the issues which can not be addressed due to lack of funding. These needs can be taken up in future budget submissions to the state government by the RWA or the Human Services Departments. In the meantime the government needs to drop the ludicrous line that there are enough resources already in the area as all it is doing is causing antagonism with those aware of the situation and furthering the belief that the government is not really serious about addressing the areas human services needs.

Expecting Government Departments to increase Redfern Waterloo expenditure without extra funding is not sustainable

One of the significant outcomes of the Human Service Plan was that it recognised that many of the area's problems required government departments to commit more money to their core activities in Redfern Waterloo. Early intervention and education programmes lifting basic literacy and numeracy are obvious

examples. The concern however is that there was no budgetary allocation to fund these increased activities. Instead departments were expected to fund such activities from within their existing budgets. This potentially sees resources to make aspects of the Redfern Waterloo Plan work needing to be taken from other areas and other programmes. This might be fine if this is only happening for Redfern Waterloo but tighter NSW budget restraints and the imperatives of the State Plan are seeing similar requirements being placed on departments from a number of different directions. REDWatch is concerned that aspects of the Human Services Plan which may make a significant difference to Redfern Waterloo will not eventuate due to the lack of budgetary support. Candidates and political parties should be asked if they will push government to ensure that all government departments receive sufficient budgetary funding to meet their service obligations under the Redfern Waterloo Human Services Plan.

A Lack of Planning Integration

REDWatch and organisations like NCOSS have been arguing since that the RWA was announced, that there is a need for a fully integrated approach to Redfern Waterloo. Such an approach would have seen issues looked at in a holistic and inter-related way. Under the current Minister's process the Redfern Waterloo Plan is the combination of the RWA's Human Services Plan, Employment & Enterprise Plan and Built Environment Plan. Ministerial Advisory Committee (MAC) Members have reported that attempts to look at linkages between their area and that of other MACs have been discouraged. In REDWatch's view this separation of all of Redfern Waterloo's issues into these three areas is inadequate. Not only are important aspects missing (such as a shared vision for the area) but also the important interactions between them. REDWatch has voiced these concerns in a number of our submissions. We have been concerned that aspects that may be important to the community but not high on the Government's agenda will be missed in the development of the RWA's plan for Redfern Waterloo. Our concerns have increased over time. Below we have detailed some examples that currently do not fit into the RWA's Plans.

Public Housing policy and the RWA

While much has been said by the RWA about Redfern Waterloo's high unemployment levels and high human services needs seldom is this linked to the high level of public housing in the area and the government's public housing policies. It is current NSW government policy, resulting from federal funding restrictions, to limit new public housing admissions to people with the highest needs. As the number of people wanting housing increases the level of needs of those entering public housing also increases. At the same time the government is introducing limited tenure leases so public tenants whose situation improves can be moved out to allow access for a higher needs tenant. All this has the effect that over the life of the RWA we expect to see an significant increase in the needs of public tenants in the area which, if not properly met, will also see an increasing impact on everyone who lives and works in the area.

Human Service providers say that the existing level of human need in the area is not currently being matched by sufficient human services. If as a result of changes to government policy the needs of public tenants increases then the tenants and the community should be assured that the government services necessary to meet this increased need will also increase. The NSW government's current position articulated by the RWA is that there will be no additional government funding to meet existing unmet need and that in the longer term public tenants in the area will be diluted by a doubling of the areas population.

The interconnections between public housing admission, human services and unemployment also impact upon unemployment. The RWA's Employment and Enterprise Plan has to take account that those that they successfully help into employment will be pushed out of public housing into an inner city housing market they will not be able to afford. Their place in public housing will be taken by probably a higher needs person requiring higher levels of support to get a job. These interconnections link together the yet unseen RWA affordable housing policy (needed by the person who has a job but loses public housing), the RWA Employment and Enterprise Strategy (which will need to be ongoing as each public housing tenant it helps will be replaced by a higher needs tenant) and the RWA Human Services Plan (which will need to service higher needs public tenants more of which are likely to not be able to be made readily "job ready").

The RWA Plans are predicated on government being able to solve the problems of those that live in the area. This is a laudable objective with which REDWatch is in agreement. Our concern is however that the results of this hard work in the eyes of the RWA Plans seems to be that the human services needs in Redfern Waterloo will be reduced while current government housing policy indicates that the level of need in the area will actually increase and require increased human services expenditure. Effective integrated planning for the future of Redfern Waterloo will need to address and service an increase in human services needs. To date we have not seen in the Human Services Plans how the RWA will address this.

Planning Services for the Aged

Redfern Waterloo has a significant aging population. Some current aged services, such as for those with dementia, are at capacity. There has been a strong voice from the community that there is a need for increase supported accommodation and nursing home beds in the area. It was argued by many in the community that Rachel Forster hospital should not be sold until after there had been an assessment of the needs for aged and supported accommodation in the area. This is clearly an example of the linkage between human services and the built environment. On the Human Services side people were told it was a matter for the Built Environment Plan and on the Built Environment side people were told that this was not in the Human Services Plan priorities. From the community side people want to see some work done on what are, and will be, the aged care needs of the community and then how these can be met within the RWA Plan. The current RWA solution of publicising local services more so everyone knows about them when they are already at capacity will not supply a long term solutions to the areas aging population.

Planning for the Area's Future Needs

Prior to the establishment of the RWA the NSW Government closed down Redfern Public School due to declining enrolments. At the same time they also tried to close Erskineville Public School. Today Erskineville is expanding and Darlington Public School is only taking children from within area. In the next few years Darlington is supposed to pick up children from the new developments in Eveleigh, The Block and the CUB site. Redfern Waterloo is already picking up population from developments on the ACI site end of Waterloo. This is all prior to the RWA unveiling its plan to double the areas population and dilute the concentration of public housing tenants. The City of Sydney Council is already documenting a baby boom where those expected to leave the city to have children are staying in the inner city. All this points to the potential need for not only childcare and pre-school places in Redfern Waterloo but also potentially for a new school. REDWatch has argued that the RWA should have retained the former Redfern Public School in State Government ownership so it could have been re-used for a public school if required. The RWA has taken the position that the decision to close the school pre-dates it and that as it is surplus Government land it could be sold. Redfern schools retention in community use, rather than as the initially proposed by the RWA as a housing development, is considered a good result but this does not negate the broader issue that forward planning work should have been done by the RWA on the projected needs of their plan before any government land was sold. The RWA view is that should the area need a new public school in 20 years time then the Government will have to buy up inner city land at that time. This seems very short sighted to REDWatch and to many in the community. REDWatch would like to see the findings of a study of the projected community needs for the expanded Redfern Waterloo community before any further publicly owned land, including the former Rachel Foster Hospital, is sold off by the RWA.

Planning for the Least Powerful

Apart from diluting the public tenants the RWA has offered no plan for how the increased polarity will be managed between higher needs public tenants and the increasingly Redfern Waterloo Manhattan. The RWA plans to date, primarily aimed at Aboriginal people, have been aimed trying to assist people into employment and away from dependence on welfare. While this is a very important component of the government and the RWA's work, the RWA needs to also recognise that for every person helped into employment another arm of government will replace them with a higher needs person. As a result, if housing allocation policy does not change, high needs people will continue to live in the area, irrespective of how successful the RWA programmes are. Planning for the future of Redfern Waterloo needs to work out how to manage the increased polarity in the area between the least powerful and those who can afford to live in the desirable inner city. Ensuring that adequate levels of services are available to meet the needs of the local community is one part of the long term strategy but it is not the only part. If public housing is to be higher turnover, as is being encouraged by current government policy, there will be increased social isolation and reduced support networks among public housing tenants with an increase likelihood of ongoing anti-social behaviour and conflict between those with few resources and those who can afford the up market inner city lifestyle. The RWA and the government have yet to come up with a integrated plan for least powerful in the new Redfern Waterloo.

Will Current RWA Plans give us lasting solutions?

It is widely believed that the RWA's primary focus is the redevelopment of Government owned land in Redfern Waterloo and that the Human Services and Employment aspects have been tacked on to make it look like the RWA is also addressing the areas social problems. The RWA disputes this but the lack of resources and planning for long term solutions to the areas problems lends support to this view for many people. REDWatch's argued in its May 2005 submission to the RWA that there should be a strategic framework which showed how the different aspects of the RWA Plan would fit together to address the areas issues. REDWatch's fear then, and now, is that the Redfern Waterloo Plan will cover what the State

Government wants to develop and reorganise but that it will not provide lasting solutions for the areas issues. At the end of the RWA process we may find an area with double the current population, a large population coming into the area to work and an even more disadvantaged marginalised community. The RWA is yet to demonstrate how this will not be the outcome. Until they can demonstrate this, scepticism about the RWA's commitment to the non-built environment aspects of their operation are likely to continue.

Some Other Planning Issues of Concern

The Need for Improved Co-ordination between Council and the RWA

The RWA has been established with a limited life. After 10 years or so the areas the RWA has taken control of will revert to being handled by Council. Council is an elected body, representing the broader City communities and hence brings a balance of the resident's perspective on issues and process as well its expertise in handling major development issues. It is vital that Council and the RWA have excellent co-operation and co-ordination.

The relationship between the RWA and Council was initially quite strained. In part this was due to the shared history of the Minister, the City Lord Mayor, some of the RWA Board Appointees and the ex City now RWA CEO. The decision by the Lord Mayor to decline a position on the RWA Board due to the secrecy provisions further weakened the link between the City and the RWA. In the first year of the RWA the relationship between the RWA and Council was poor. While the relationship seems to have improved in the last year there is further room for improvement. It is in residents interests that the City and the RWA take a co-operative approach to addressing the areas issues be they in the delivery of human services, complimentarily in planning controls or in putting joint pressure on government departments for transport changes. Council has an important role also in monitoring the RWA to ensure that RWA supervised developments include provision for the increased services needed to service the increased worker and residential population in the RWA Plans. Any short fall in such provisions will fall back onto the council.

Building on our Heritage

There are often many options about how an area is developed. Under the current RWA model these decisions are made by the Minister and the local community has the right to comment on the Minister's plans while they are on exhibition. This does not always deliver the best outcomes. Currently there is a push by REDWatch and some of those who have worked at the Eveleigh Rail yards to retain some active rail heritage use within the RWA's Eveleigh re-development. The Large Erecting Shop in South Eveleigh is being used for rail heritage and this could be retained and developed further to support heritage tourism and maintain a valuable heritage link to the rail yards that defined much of the Area over the last 130 years. Currently the RWA Built Environment Plan shows the "Large" as both as a heritage building and also as being zoned for an up to 12 storey building. REDWatch, the National Trust, Friends of Eveleigh and many others are of the view that a modest investment in the Large could provide heritage training, tourism and an active link with the area's past. Such approaches have been successfully adopted in some other cities. Similarly a proposal for a heritage walk linking all the heritage sites with some exhibitions and interpretive signage seems to REDWatch to be worthy of further exploration and support. The adaptive reuse of some railway buildings in a re-developed Eveleigh is not the only option for recognising and continuing our historical associations with the area.

Rushed Decisions leave Important Areas out of Future RWA Plans

The Act requires the Minister to formulate the Redfern Waterloo Plan and to keep it under review. It is not clear currently how this will be implemented in the case of the Built Environment Plan (BEP). What is clear is that the stand off between the Minister and the Aboriginal Housing Company (AHC) over the re-development of The Block has seen The Block go from an important public site under the RED Strategy to almost irrelevant under the BEP. In recent months it appears as if the relationship between the Minister and the AHC has improved and that an accommodation about the re-development of The Block will be reached. If this happens REDWatch would like to see the BEP revised to recognise the important role of the Block to Redfern Waterloo. The current RWA works allocation of \$100,000 for lighting and seating on the Block is inadequate and REDWatch would like to see the RWA support and encourage the construction of RED Square as a public space linking The Block to Redfern Railway station and the rest of Redfern.

The Lesson from the RWA – AHC Battle

While there is hope that the Minister will allow the AHC's proposal for the Block to go ahead and that the standoff is over, it should not be forgotten that the Minister's and the RWA's adversarial approach to the AHC has created much animosity towards the RWA and the Minister in the community and has lead to

repeated calls for the Minister's resignation. The government and the RWA have tried to bully an Aboriginal organisation, including by using of planning controls, to get the Government's plan for The Block in place against the wishes of the AHC and local people. Ironically the AHC was one of the few parties that had a formal Partnership Agreement with the Premier's departments RWPP prior to the RWA. The damage done by the RWA handling of the AHC alone should be enough to encourage the Government and the RWA to find new ways of working with the Redfern Waterloo community. If there is a lesson from the RWA – AHC it has to be that the RWA and the Minister needs to listen to and work with the community rather than try and ride rough shod over it in the name of state significance?

The Content of the Plans

We have not gone here into the specific content of the various Plans produced by the RWA. REDWatch has previously made submissions on these plans and our concerns can be found on the REDWatch website. Links to Major REDWatch documents can be found below:

[Submission on Preparation of Redfern Waterloo Plan](http://www.redwatch.org.au/redwatch/statements/050531Plan/)

[<http://www.redwatch.org.au/redwatch/statements/050531Plan/>]

[Submission on RWA Draft Human Services Plan\(Phase One\)](http://www.redwatch.org.au/redwatch/statements/051111dhsp/)

[<http://www.redwatch.org.au/redwatch/statements/051111dhsp/>]

[Submission on RWA Employment Enterprise Plan](http://www.redwatch.org.au/redwatch/statements/060228redwatcheesub/)

[<http://www.redwatch.org.au/redwatch/statements/060228redwatcheesub/>]

[Submission to the RWA Built Environment Plan](http://www.redwatch.org.au/RWA/statesignificant/ssbackground/submissions/redwatch/view)

[<http://www.redwatch.org.au/RWA/statesignificant/ssbackground/submissions/redwatch/view>]

[Submission on Draft Human Services Plan \(Phase 2\)](http://www.redwatch.org.au/RWA/humanservices/phase2paper/redwatchhsp2/view)

[<http://www.redwatch.org.au/RWA/humanservices/phase2paper/redwatchhsp2/view>]

[Submission on RWA Draft Redfern-Waterloo Authority Contributions Plan 2006](http://www.redwatch.org.au/RWA/statesignificant/dcplans/061215redwatch/)

[<http://www.redwatch.org.au/RWA/statesignificant/dcplans/061215redwatch/>]

[Submission on Draft RWA Affordable Housing Contributions Plan 2006](http://www.redwatch.org.au/RWA/statesignificant/dcplans/070212redwatch/)

[<http://www.redwatch.org.au/RWA/statesignificant/dcplans/070212redwatch/>]

Obviously there are many questions that can be asked of candidates and parties in the lead up to the election based on the plans. These may include asking about the candidates view about the three eighteen storey towers being planned for the Redfern Central Core opposite Redfern Station, the doubling of Redfern Waterloo's population, affordable housing and the proposed redevelopment of public housing proposed in Stage Two of the BEP.

It is not possible for us to go in to all possible issues here. Instead we have tried to sketch out some of the overarching issues which if properly addressed would see a more inclusive planning process and the opportunity for those that currently live and work in Redfern Waterloo to have the opportunity to raise their concerns and have their suggestions properly considered.

The 2007 Election Provides an Opportunity for Change

With the RWA Plans largely public it is an opportune time to reflect on what has and what has not been achieved by the RWA and its Minister in its first two years. Are there gaps in the plans and processes that need to be addressed? Are there opportunities to create greater co-operation and dialogue between the community, the Minister and the RWA to deliver a better outcome for the area?

The 2007 State Election provides an opportunity to question all political parties about their past positions on Redfern Waterloo and on their policies for the future of the area. The election also presents the possibility of a change in Minister, irrespective of the election outcome.

If the Minister does change we hope that the new minister will take a greater personal interest in meeting with the community and listening to their concerns and that some of the concerns raised in this paper will find a more receptive ear than has been the case in the past. Hopefully this might result in a new partnership between the Government, Opposition Parties and the Community to deliver real and lasting outcomes for Redfern Eveleigh Darlington and Waterloo.

REDWatch has also prepared a series of questions based on this document for distribution to candidates. Responses will appear on the REDWatch website <http://www.redwatch.org.au/redw/elections/state2007/>

For further information on the issues raised contact the REDWatch Spokesperson:

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Actions Speak Louder than Words: Redfern-Waterloo's Recent Experience of 'Consultation'

by Geoffrey Turnbull

The stand off over the future of The Block, the most contested area of Redfern-Waterloo, highlights the gap between the promises made to the community when the Redfern-Waterloo Authority ('RWA') was announced and what has been delivered on the ground. The RWA was intended to ensure consultation and communication between the New South Wales ('NSW') Government, the Redfern-Waterloo community and various community, government and non-government organisations, in decision-making regarding the future of the area.

Since 2001, the NSW Premier's Department has been working in Redfern-Waterloo through the Redfern-Waterloo Partnership Project ('RWPP') attempting to address the complex issues confronting the area.^[1] A review of the area's human services^[2] and the proposal for the RWA emerged from their work. The RWPP was intended to continue alongside the new RWA to handle the reform of human services but was absorbed into the RWA on 30 June 2005. The Minister is responsible for their combined operation.^[3]

The RWPP's activities were well documented in evidence to the NSW Legislative Council Standing Committee on Social Issues *Inquiry into Issues Relating to Redfern/Waterloo* ('the Inquiry') through both the NSW Government's report to the Inquiry^[4] and submissions from the community about the RWPP's activities.^[5] The Inquiry was very critical of the way the RWPP had failed to work with local people. The recommendations of its second and third *Interim Report* were:

That the NSW Government, through the Redfern/Waterloo Partnership Project, take all possible steps to achieve genuine partnership between State and Commonwealth agencies, the City of Sydney Council, the non-government sector and the local community in order to address the issues facing Redfern and Waterloo.

That the Redfern/Waterloo Partnership Project develops and implements a comprehensive strategy to ensure there is effective consultation and communication with the Redfern and Waterloo communities. In addition, to improve its relationship with the local community, particularly the Aboriginal community, the Redfern/Waterloo Partnership Project should establish mechanisms to facilitate capacity building within the Aboriginal community.^[6]

On 26 October 2004, before the Inquiry was completed, the NSW Government announced it would establish the RWA under the *Redfern-Waterloo Authority Act* 2004 (NSW). In the words of the Premier's media statement:

Mr Carr said we need a coordinated government approach to this area. 'We will work with the local community to achieve this, and build on the work already done.'^[7]

This article examines examples of the RWA 'working with the community' to determine the extent to which the RWA and the Minister for Redfern-Waterloo are working cooperatively with the community, and the response of the RWA to the findings of the Redfern-Waterloo Inquiry.

Case Study 1 – The Legislation 'Consultation'

When the RWA was announced, REDWatch, a residents' watch group, requested time for the community to consider the legislation before it was introduced to Parliament.^[8] The NSW Government instead rushed the legislation into the Lower House and, despite significant opposition, little change was accepted.^[9]

REDWatch then joined with individuals and groups to campaign for changes to the legislation in the Upper House.^[10] Aboriginal groups came together under the banner of the Organisation of Aboriginal Unity ('OAU') (later re-formed as the Redfern Aboriginal Authority)^[11] to prevent the NSW Government from compulsorily acquiring The Block and to support the *Pemulwuy* project.^[12]

While the changes came about as a result of the campaign, Minister Sartor described the changes in the following way:

In drafting the legislation, the Government was conscious of the need to consult widely with key stakeholders...

From these consultations, a number of amendments were proposed and accepted. These include:

- ...
- *Guaranteeing Aboriginal representation on the Advisory Committees; and*
- *Consulting with the Aboriginal Housing Company and the Aboriginal community on the long term strategic vision for The Block.*

These amendments ... ensure that consultation will occur with the local community.^[13]

Within a month, the history of RWA consultation was already being rewritten.

Case Study 2 – The Three Ministerial Advisory Committees

In December 2004, Minister Sartor asked residents to write to him with their views regarding community advisory structures. The request indicates that the Minister already had clear ideas regarding what such structures would involve:

The current thinking is for three advisory committees of about 15 members each, comprising residents and State and local government...

I am also considering public forums for residents or representatives of community organisations...

[T]he Redfern Waterloo Plan...will be subject to public exhibition and input at each stage.[\[14\]](#)

During the lobbying on the RWA Bill, REDWatch and a number of other groups argued that the legislation should be strengthened to ensure that community consultation mechanisms were guaranteed in the legislation rather than left to Ministerial discretion. The groups wanted at least the same opportunities for community participation in planning decisions under the RWA as are available under local government legislation.[\[15\]](#) It was argued that there should be an overarching community advisory group or council, as existed under the RWPP. The Government had accepted the need for a more integrated response to human service delivery in the area,[\[16\]](#) and the same principles should apply to the RWA advisory structure. Further, it was argued that the Minister's appointment of a few residents to the advisory groups would not adequately ensure a community voice.

In April 2005,[\[17\]](#) it became clear that the Minister's request for written responses from the community was considered to constitute 'community consultation'. The final outcome of the 'consultation' appeared identical to what the Minister indicated he had in mind in December 2004. The leaflet said in part:

Following community consultation, the Minister for Redfern-Waterloo, the Hon Frank Sartor MP, is now inviting Expressions of Interest from residents of Redfern, Waterloo, Eveleigh and Darlington to participate in any of three Ministerial Advisory Committees...

A Community Forum to meet at least four times a year will be open for members of the public to attend. The purpose of this Forum is to provide the Minister with advice on the broad strategic direction of the Redfern-Waterloo Plan and to provide the community with a direct link to the Minister.[\[18\]](#)

Back in December 2003, the RWPP presented the community with their *Community Engagement Strategy*.[\[19\]](#) It was well received as it covered a range of consultation mechanisms. The strategy, however, was never implemented. There has not been a Community Forum of either the RWPP or the RWA since 2003 and the RWPP Community Council was only convened a couple of times in 2004 and not reappointed.

The RWA's community engagement strategy, as so far advised to the community, falls well short of that proposed by the RWPP. There is neither a Community Council nor opportunities for community involvement in Taskforces and public discussion workshops to have in-depth discussion around specific topics or areas of concern to the community. It is unclear how Community Forums four times a year will provide the 'broad strategic direction of the Redfern-Waterloo Plan' as well as the opportunity for the community to meet the Minister, find out what the RWA is doing and raise their concerns. Nine months into its operation, no Community Forums have been held and clearly the RWA's strategic direction is coming from somewhere other than the community.

Proper mechanisms to inform the community about RWA activities have not even been put in place, let alone the genuine partnership that the Upper House Inquiry recommended. We are yet to see 'a comprehensive strategy to ensure there is effective consultation and communication with the Redfern and Waterloo communities' or the improved 'relationship with the local community, particularly the Aboriginal community'.[\[20\]](#)

Case Study 3 - Consultation with the Aboriginal Housing Company

Prior to the RWA announcement, the Premier's Department had been working with the AHC on the *Pemulwuy* Project.[\[21\]](#) The project was based on an award-winning[\[22\]](#) social plan[\[23\]](#) and included 62 homes to be built in The Block area. There had been many meetings discussing crime prevention, design and other issues of concern to the AHC and the RWPP.

As the land owner of The Block, the AHC expected that, in the words of Minister Sartor to NCOSS and other organisations:

The RWA will... consult closely with the Aboriginal community and the Aboriginal Housing Company when considering plans for The Block and Aboriginal housing. The government recognises the importance of The Block and it will remain a place of significance to the Aboriginal community.[\[24\]](#)

In early December 2004, the RWPP had spelt out the Government's position on The Block:

No decisions have been made about the future of The Block. The Aboriginal Housing Company and the Minister for Redfern-Waterloo are working together to establish a sustainable vision for the area.

There is a continuing dialogue between the Minister's office and members of the Aboriginal Housing Company. Whatever happens on The Block, a broad community consultation strategy will occur.

The site is of great significance to Aboriginal people in NSW and across Australia...

The NSW Parliament Social Issues Standing Committee Inquiry into Issues Relating to Redfern-Waterloo acknowledged that the redevelopment of The Block is of utmost importance.

There is no intention by the State Government to compulsorily acquire The Block.[\[25\]](#)

However, the first time Minister Sartor personally met with the AHC Board on 8 February 2005 he made it clear that he would not support the *Pemulwuy* Project. Instead the Minister said he was only prepared to replace the 19 homes still existing around The Block and that the Government would find housing for the balance of the 62 homes elsewhere in Redfern-Waterloo.[\[26\]](#)

The Minister wanted to establish a taskforce with the AHC, which would also include representatives from State, Federal and local Governments, to establish 'a new positive vision for The Block and its environs'.[\[27\]](#) While the Minister promised it would have an Aboriginal majority it would not consider the *Pemulwuy* Project or The Block being used for Aboriginal housing. Apart from the AHC representatives, the other members would be Government representatives or of the Minister's choosing. Under this proposal, the Minister retained the power to unilaterally overrule any suggestions proposed.[\[28\]](#)

The offer was made on a 'take it or leave it'[\[29\]](#) basis and the AHC board decided to leave it and to continue to work to bring the *Pemulwuy* project to realisation. The AHC then proceeded to establish the *Pemulwuy* Vision Taskforce, chaired by Australian Labor Party elder statesman Tom Uren, to look further at both the *Pemulwuy* Project and at the broader vision for the area.[\[30\]](#)

On 29 August 2005 the Minister admitted publicly that the RWA and the AHC had reached an impasse. He said, '[e]verything's negotiable except for concentration of high-dependency housing there'.[\[31\]](#) A subsequent request by the RWA for a copy of the AHC's plans for The Block 'as a means of moving matters forward' brought some hope of an agreement.[\[32\]](#) Hope died a few days later, however, when an open letter from Frank Sartor to Mick Mundine, AHC Chief Executive Officer, appeared on the front page of the RWA's first newsletter.[\[33\]](#) The letter re-stated the Minister's position and attempted to hold the AHC responsible for the failure of the RWA and the AHC to sit down 'to come up with a shared vision for The Block'.

The ongoing battle between the Government and the AHC is being documented on the AHC's website.[\[34\]](#)

Conclusion

These case studies illustrate the community's early experience of the RWA and its Minister who, under the RWA legislation, has the final say in what will and what will not happen in our area. They demonstrate that the consultation, partnership and community engagement which were called for by the Legislative Council's Redfern-Waterloo Inquiry have not been put into practice by the NSW Government. Further, they highlight why the community wanted their right to have input into the decisions made about them by the RWA protected in the legislation rather than left to the discretion of the Minister for Redfern-Waterloo.

While the community was not successful in gaining legislative rights, both the Indigenous and non-Indigenous communities in Redfern, Eveleigh, Darlington and Waterloo continue to agitate for the NSW Government to 'achieve genuine partnership between State and Commonwealth agencies, the City of Sydney Council, the non-government sector and the local community in order to address the issues facing Redfern and Waterloo' as recommended by the Redfern-Waterloo Inquiry.^[35]

Geoffrey Turnbull has been a resident of Redfern for 27 years. He is a member of the Pemulwuy Vision Taskforce and spokesperson for REDWatch (the Redfern, Eveleigh, Darlington and Waterloo watch group – www.redwatch.org.au).^[36] Geoff has a BA Hons 1 in Sociology from UNSW and is a former UNSW Tharunka Editor and Students' Union Vice President.

[1] Premier of NSW, 'State Government Extends Redfern-Waterloo Partnership Project' (Press Release, 27 May 2004).

[2] Morgan Disney and Associates Pty Ltd (On Behalf of the Consultancy Consortium), *Making Connections: Better Services, Stronger Community*, Report on Review of the Human Services System in Redfern and Waterloo Report for NSW Premier's Department (2004).

[3] Frank Sartor, 'Funding for New Authority to Drive Urban Renewal' (Press Release, 24 May 2005).

[4] Submission to the Standing Committee on Social Issues Inquiry into Redfern Waterloo, NSW Parliament, 30 April 2004 (NSW Government).

[5] See the Parliament of New South Wales website
<<http://www.parliament.nsw.gov.au/prod/parlment/committee.nsf/0/8CCF4160D3E9AAD3CA256E4A00024CD5>> at 29 September 2005.

[6] New South Wales Legislative Council Standing Committee on Social Issues, *Inquiry into Issues Relating to Redfern/Waterloo: Interim Report*, (2004) xv.

[7] Frank Sartor, 'Premier Carr Announces 10-year Redfern-Waterloo Plan' (Press Release, 26 October 2004).

[8] REDWatch, 'REDWatch Comments on RWA and RWP Announcement' (Press Release, 3 November 2004).

[9] Clover Moore, 'Who? What? How? — But We Know Why!' (2004) 223 *CLOVER'S eNews*,
<<http://www.clovermoore.com/idx.htm?http://www.clovermoore.com/enews/2005/229-050114.htm>> at 29 September 2005.

[10] Debra Jopson, 'Action Group Wants Law to Ensure Rights for Residents', *Sydney Morning Herald* (Sydney), 1 December 2004.

[11] Redfern Aboriginal Authority, 'Sol Bellear to Lead New Aboriginal Authority' (Press Release, 21 September 2005).

[12] 'Aborigines Plan Protest Over Redfern "Land Grab"' *Sydney Morning Herald* (Sydney), 2 December 2004.

[13] Letter from Frank Sartor to Garry Moore, Director of New South Wales Council for Social Services ('NCOSS') (undated).

[14] Letter from Frank Sartor to Redfern-Waterloo residents, 'Your Views Invited on Community Advisory Structure', (December 2004).

[15] REDWatch, Redfern-Waterloo Authority Bill 2004 Briefing Note (30 November 2004).

[16] Morgan Disney and Associates Pty Ltd, above n 3, 86.

[17] Redfern-Waterloo Authority, *Redfern-Waterloo Plan No 3* (2005).

[18] *Ibid.*

[19] Redfern-Waterloo Partnership Project, *Community Engagement Strategy* (2003).

[20] New South Wales Legislative Council Standing Committee on Social Issues, above n 7, xv.

[21] Aboriginal Housing Company, *Pemulwuy Project Profile 2000-2005* (2005).

[22] National Award for Excellence in Community Housing in the Category of Innovation (23 October 2001); International 2004 Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design ('CPTED') Innovation Award from the International Security Management and Crime Prevention Institute and the International CPTED Association (16 September 2004); see the Aboriginal Housing Company website for more information <<http://www.ahc.org.au>> at 29 September.

[23] Angie Pitts and Peter Valilis, Aboriginal Housing Company, *Community Social Plan* (2000-1).

[24] Sartor, above n 14.

[25] Redfern-Waterloo Partnership Project, *Redfern Waterloo Plan No 2*, December 2004, 2.

[26] Open letter from Frank Sartor to Mick Mundine, Aboriginal Housing Company, August 2005.

[27] Letter from Frank Sartor to Action for World Development, 31 August 2005.

[28] Frank Sartor, Ministerial Briefing Paper to AHC Board Meeting, 8 February 2005.

[29] Interview with Board Members at the AHC Board Meeting, 8 February 2005.

[30] Aboriginal Housing Company, above n 23, 8.

[31] Tim Dick, 'Sartor Refuses to Budge on The Block', *Sydney Morning Herald*, 29 August 2005.

[32] Michael Mundine, Unpublished letter to the *Sydney Morning Herald*, 30 August 2005.

[33] Sartor, above n 29, 1.

[34] Aboriginal Housing Company <<http://www.ahc.org.au>> at 29 September 2005.

[35] New South Wales Legislative Council Standing Committee on Social Issues, above n 7, xv.

[36] Most documents referenced in this paper can be accessed via the REDWatch website at <<http://www.redwatch.org.au>>.

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Redfern plan backfires: report

Sunanda Creagh

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A \$2 million State Government program for disadvantaged Redfern youth actually encouraged children to stay out on the street late at night and exacerbated tensions with local police, a secret report reveals.

The Government has gone to great lengths to hide the embarrassing review of the Redfern Waterloo Street Team - a group of welfare workers parachuted into the suburb in late 2003 - by refusing to release the report under freedom of information laws.

The secret report slams the Government for establishing the street team "as a result of a cabinet minute, rather than through a planned response ... by determining the 'solution' to a perceived problem at a senior level, those charged with responsibility for implementing the model were constrained in their ability to develop a more flexible response to actual needs."

The street team, made up of workers from the Central Sydney Area Health Service, the Department of Community Services and non-government organisations, conducted late night walks to encourage young people to go home and referred cases to social services for follow up.

A key program goal - guiding children on the street late at night home - ended up backfiring, with "staff suspecting they were encouraging many young people to be out later on the streets as they knew they could get a lift home from the [Redfern Waterloo Street Team]".

The review found administration took up too much time and resources and the street team worsened community relations with local police.

Helen Campbell from the Redfern Legal Centre said the findings did not surprise her.

"If they found you on the street at 11 at night, you would get a pizza and a free trip home. Why wouldn't you stay out later?" she said. "There is still no youth refuge in Redfern. If a kid is out at night, one of the questions you have to ask is, is it safe at home?"

Geoff Turnbull from the REDwatch community group warned that despite its failure, the Government had not learned any lessons from the street team experiment.

"If they had started to change the way they operated in the area, I wouldn't be as concerned. But decisions continue to be made at a cabinet level and implemented without working with what is already happening in Redfern and Waterloo," he said.

"The [Government's Redfern-Waterloo] Human Services Plan says that the stuff they are doing in terms of youth services is based on what they have learned out of the street team. That was the reason we wanted to see the evaluation. The future of what happens to services here is based on the street team."

A spokeswoman for the Minister for Redfern-Waterloo, Frank Sartor, said the minister dissolved the project shortly after inheriting it in 2005 and reallocated funding to other community projects.

The Yaama Dhiyaan indigenous training college received \$750,000, \$500,000 went to a new Police Citizens Youth Club at the redeveloped former Redfern Public School, and leftover funds were diverted to South Sydney Youth Service and the Fact Tree youth service.

This story was found at:

<http://www.smh.com.au/articles/2007/10/30/1193618832152.html>

Community News

Secret makeover plans for Redfern leave locals far from happy

By Angela Dewan

The Redfern Waterloo -Authority (RWA) and Rail Corp's joint design plan for the development of Redfern station was completed in early September. The RWA had earlier informed residents that it would consult with them about the plan, which is expected to include commercial development around the station.

Instead the plan remains secret. In reply to a parliamentary question from NSW Legislative Greens Councillor Lee Rhiannon on October 15, RWA chief executive Robert Domm said the options would be considered by The NSW Cabinet and would only be publicly released after Cabinet made a decision. The lack of openness around the station plan has led community watchdog organisation REDwatch to complain about RWA secrecy. (See *street team story on this page*)

Local resident and spokesperson for REDwatch, Geoff Turnbull, told *Precinct southside*: "Everything is conducted behind closed doors until you get to the point where they've made the plan and then it's put on exhibition. The RWA Act leaves everything up to the discretion of the Minister."

The RWA Minister is Mr Frank Sartor who is also minister for planning.

Secrecy over redevelopment plans for the station is just one issue which concerns REDwatch.

The organisation, which represents a wide spread of community interests is also disappointed that entries to a RWA design competition for the redevelopment of North Eveleigh Railway yards will not be open to the public until a decision has been made.

Set up in 2004, the RWA

was given planning control of the Redfern Waterloo area by the NSW government. This wrested control of planning and development from the Sydney City Council.

At the time, local independent MP and Sydney Lord Mayor Clover Moore warned parliament: "the worst outcome would be that the new authority would simply add another layer of bureaucracy, alienate the community and ... the whole project would end up being nothing more than a real



Redfern Station earmarked for a facelift.

estate development exercise."

In 2005, RWA attempted to allay these fears by including in its first public newsletter a section titled *How Your Voice Will Be Heard* which promised at least four community forums a year open to the public. Geoff Turnbull said only one public meeting, which was exclusively on the topic of public

housing, has ever been held.

The RWA also set up several Ministerial Advisory Committees. Helen Campbell, executive officer of Redfern Legal Centre was invited to be a member of the Human Services Committee.

She said: the minister did not attend the meetings and the minutes never recorded what

comments anybody made: "So you couldn't look at those minutes and know what my input was."

Like Mr Turnbull, Helen Campbell, who was not reappointed after her term expired this year, said she believed the RWA Act had the effect of removing the democratic rights of Redfern Waterloo residents.

FOI controversy over street team

A street team that provide youth services in the Redfern and Waterloo areas between 2003 and 2005 failed partly because the model imposed on it by senior NSW government public servants was "flawed", confused and needed more community consultation and involvement.

These were findings of the *Review of the Redfern Waterloo Street Team* (RWST) draft report, a copy of which has been obtained by *Precinct southside*.

An urgent Cabinet directive established the street team project in 2001 after negative media coverage about problems with young people in Waterloo. The plan was for community education, crisis services, early intervention and youth activities to be delivered by a single team representing a number of Government departments and non-government organisations.

The scathing report found as a result of the flawed plan, experienced staff left, very few children were helped and that 30 per cent of requests for help were for a "lift home" -- a service which staff suspected encouraged young people to stay out at night.

In 2004, the NSW government told a state parliamentary committee into Redfern Waterloo that it regarded the street team as one its greatest achievements.

In mid 2005, independent consultant Penny Ryan from RPR was paid \$41,000 by the NSW Department of Community Services to prepare the evaluation report. She found the original plan was not "properly thought

through". Many people interviewed for the report identified the imposition of the model from above as a key factor in the difficulties the RWST later faced.

Ms Ryan found that if future services were to be more successful there would need to be a "greater level of collaboration and ownership by community members, parents, young people and service providers."

The findings were provided to the Operational Management Group of senior public servants who planned and oversaw the project. *Precinct* cannot report if Ms Ryan's views about the flawed management of the project were included in her final report because the NSW Premier's Department and the Redfern-Waterloo Authority (RWA) refused to release the report.

Ms Ryan said she was unable to comment.

After the government received the report, the street team project was closed down. Late in 2005, members of the community organisation REDwatch asked for copies of the draft and final report. The RWA told REDwatch to make an application under the Freedom of Information Act. At the outset, REDwatch applicant Geoff Turnbull agreed that any names revealing personal information could be deleted. In fact, the draft report contains almost no names of any kind.

In an email tabled in NSW parliament last year, senior FOI officer in the NSW Premier's Department Ken Cull advised the RWA that the document "may be Cabinet document in confidence" because Cabinet had made a

decision that there should be an evaluation of the street team project.

Cabinet documents are exempt under the FOI act. The RWA refused to supply the document on this basis. In February 2006, REDwatch asked the RWA to review its decision pointing out that the FOI officer had the discretion to release a document if it was in the public interest even if it could be regarded as a Cabinet document.

Mr Turnbull said he reminded the authority that the object of the FOI Act was to "extend, as far as possible, the rights of the public to obtain access to information held by the government."

The Redfern-Waterloo Authority's, CEO Robert Domm was unavailable for comment.

A source inside the RWA said that the authority did not release the report because it "didn't want to put the young people included in the report in that position at the start of their careers." There are no names in the report and REDwatch had already agreed to delete any personal information.

Two years on, REDwatch still wants the report.

"Without Government making available evaluation reports it is impossible to objectively assess what has happened and what has not. All you have is the RWA spin about what a great job they are doing, and the services experience that little has changed and scarce human services resources have been wasted," said spokesperson Geoff Turnbull.