

**Submission
No 172**

INQUIRY INTO SOCIAL, PUBLIC AND AFFORDABLE HOUSING

Organisation: Millers Point, Dawes Point, The Rocks and Walsh Bay Resident
Action Group

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**The Millers Point Dawes Point,
The Rocks and Walsh Bay Resident
Action Group (RAG)**



**Submission on the
Inquiry into Social, Public and
Affordable Housing**



RAG Contact: mprag@bigpond.com 9241 2875
5 Windmill Street, Millers Point NSW 2000
www.millerspointrag.org.au

**Millers Point, Dawes Point, The Rocks and Walsh Bay Resident Action Group
Select Committee on Social, Public and Affordable Housing**

Inquiry into Social, Public and Affordable Housing

SUBMISSION

The Resident Action Group is concerned that the Committee and the Government deal with this matter taking into account the important human considerations of the matter. It is acknowledged that there are serious financial implications but it is more important to understand the pressing problems of the people needing support in this area.

We draw your attention to the following Guideline in the *Conservation Management Guidelines: NSW Dept. of Housing Properties Millers Point Volume One 28 November, 2002*:

It is desirable that government ownership and social housing use be continued to ensure ongoing conservation and integrity of the area, including the fabric and social/historic values. This includes the management of appropriate social mix and provision of appropriate commercial services to support the community, and enable a holistic management strategy.

Within the body of the document there is this telling point:

In private ownership, the integrity of the cultural significance of the area has the potential to rapidly decrease, despite existing statutory controls, due to high inner city property values and associated re-development expectations – the potential for change can be gauged by other similar areas such as Paddington. Under single government ownership the area will have a consistent approach to conservation of fabric and forms of Millers Point, and enable the ongoing provision of a traditional range of affordable/social housing opportunities, commercial/support services and the characteristic community profile of the area.

The need for housing support in the community

It has been accepted for many years that our society includes people with difficulties which make them unable to support themselves through employment. This is in most cases not due to any failing or fault but through advancing age and/or disabilities dating from birth or arising from injury or illness (mental or physical).

It is important that society's obligation to support those people is not minimised and is acknowledged from time to time as society's expectations and aims improve.

Society's obligations to its members

People obey the law, support society and their families. They pay taxes and other government funding for many years. Then when they are old or with disabilities they should be able to look to society to respond. This is not a request for special treatment but a reasonable acknowledgement for years of law-abiding, supportive hard work.

The sign of a civilised society is the way it supports and nurtures those of its members who can no longer support and protect themselves. On the other hand, most of these people do not just depend on society for support. They provide what assistance they can. This includes:

- Care of children and grandchildren,
- Care of one-another through assistance in shopping, correspondence, laundry and housework, and
- Community support in local organisations such as Darling House, the Resident Action Group and youth support groups.

What people need

Residents need:

- Access to medical, financial and similar support
- Access to a supportive community with opportunities for social interaction and support
- Opportunities to contribute to the community as well as receive from it
- Acknowledgement of their skills and capacities and their value as human beings.

Why preserve communities

Communities support their residents. They provide encouragement, acknowledgement and assistance to their members. Human beings need recognition and response to stay active and at peace with the world. Communities can provide those things from day to day. It is very valuable.

How do communities assist?

Communities vary in their structure and functioning. Many provide opportunities for discussion and communication, assistance with daily living and emotional support. Some have assistance with shopping and for outings in the company of other residents. It is vital that elderly people and people with disabilities have opportunities for daily communication with other people, both for their own sakes and for the assistance of each other.

This assistance can be in regard to changes in health (physical and mental) and in the normal challenges of living at an advanced age.

Note that communities make their own contributions to the quality of life around them. As an example, the Millers Point community has supported the local Resident Action Group for more than thirty years informing the Council and State Government

departments of the needs of the community, methods of improvement of services and potential problems and changes. The Group is highly respected and very active.

This area has also established its own aged care hostel which provides high quality care for nine residents while complying most efficiently with the demanding requirements of Commonwealth and State legislation.

What is needed?

Support for the local community is very necessary. Communities cannot provide the valuable and necessary supportive environment without support from local government and the State and Federal Governments. Support can include:

- Clean, efficient accommodation
- Regular and competent repairs and maintenance
- Good communication from the government bodies concerned
- Support for regular and efficient transport, postal services,
- Space and opportunities for community activities and services – such as meeting rooms and storage for records and equipment.

How can Housing assist?

Housing can provide clean, comfortable and suitable accommodation, in a community which is compatible and accessible. This does not require the provision of particularly high standards of accommodation but rather an emphasis on simplicity, ease of access, suitable transport and local shopping, access to medical and counselling support and support of local groups in appeals for facilities such as meeting rooms.

Where should these facilities be provided?

For more than a hundred years, the families and friends of many of the present residents have lived in this area. More recent residents have settled into the community and have been totally accepted. We support one another.

However, an important reason why the community should be maintained is its heritage function. This community continues the staunch support and loyalty it has shown for many years. Various groups have suggested that the properties be sold to satisfy passing demands and governments over the years have realised that the community was more important than transient applications of funds.

We look to the government to support us and continue this unique group in the oldest settlement in Australia.