

**INQUIRY INTO ISSUES RELATING TO  
REDFERN/WATERLOO**

**Organisation:**

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**Telephone:**

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**Theme:**

**Summary**

**Submission to the Legislative Council Standing Committee On  
Social Issues:  
Inquiry Into Issues Relating to Redfern/Waterloo**

**Introduction**

As we know, the social experiment that the Whitlam Government initiated to grant Aboriginals their first land and housing in Redfern was a noble effort, but was thwarted by mismanagement & subsequent neglect or inadequate support mechanisms. Thus the community was left to expand and decay.

The largest and most overlooked factor contributing to this demise is the institutionalised racism that permeates every level of policing, government, judiciary, the media and the broader community.

This is not a negative diatribe against the above-mentioned groups, but a long-overdue attempt to recognise the single most important issue affecting the Aboriginal people living in the Redfern/Waterloo region and the broader Aboriginal population. When we, as a State and a Nation recognise this, we have made a monumental step in the direction of addressing the core issues that have a detrimental effect on this much-maligned community.

This will be seen purely as a positive step in future retrospectivity - possibly a catalyst for true recognition of Aboriginal people as equals and lifting their socio-political, health & economic status to a comparable state to the broader populace.

We must be able to redress the long held preconceptions throughout much of society by initially seeing racism and the plight of Aboriginal people as not an "Aboriginal problem", but as a colonization problem and a national problem. This problem is a national disgrace - though not an impervious problem. If addressed and overcome, it can be a part of a broader nation-building as important as the ANZAC tradition, mateship and an Australian consciousness.

The focus on Redfern and Waterloo to address this issue provides a unique opportunity for an example for the rest of Australia - a catalyst for a broader education of a nation and transformation of the plight of a people. It is only one issue, but it is the single issue that has spawned the near destruction of an entire culture. Only through their persistence has this proud people survived. Other broader issues must be addressed in harmony with and subsequently to addressing racism; but it is through racism that disaffection, disempowerment, health, crime, violence, high mortality and incarceration rates, poor education, poverty, dispossession and numerous other core problems have all evolved.

**Phase One – The Conference**

We believe that to tackle this foundation to Aboriginal problems, racism needs to be addressed by the most influential people in our society. The leaders and representatives, the teachers, the decision makers, those who determine the future direction, development and cohesive progression of our local state and national community must all be educated and led on the path to solving this most insidious problem, so that they can impart this knowledge to and implement these solutions within the broader community under their sphere of influence.

To achieve this, a three day conference (Open Eye) inviting representatives from all these organizations as well as representatives from a broad cross-section of Aboriginal organizations and communities will be organized.

Open Eye will be held outside the Redfern/Waterloo area to allow for a clinical 3<sup>rd</sup>-person perspective to be achieved, without the threat of a high-security environment, the threat of intimidation by local Aboriginal people of the invited guests and police against the local people.

Open Eye will be opened with a smoking ceremony and a short introduction and welcome to all of the invited guests. Then Jane Elliott will be welcomed and will address the audience. She is arguably the most prominent and well respected expert on racism internationally. Her journey commenced in Iowa USA in the 1960's when as a teacher she decided to conduct an experiment (blue-eyed/brown-eyed) in her class in response to the murder of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. This experiment was based on the premise that racism was spawned out of an illogical fear of different people from an arbitrary distinguishable feature such as skin pigmentation. As such she decided to prove the cruel and mindless nature of such bigotry by separating the class into eye colour and propagating an environment of hatred and bigotry against the blue eyed children. The results were extraordinary. These kids learned a lesson in one day, so intense, that it would affect their lives forever. This lesson has been repeated numerous times with adults as well as children. A catalogue of documentaries has been produced ( [www.janeelliott.com](http://www.janeelliott.com) ), of which one - "Blue-Eyed" was aired on SBS in the mid-90's. The response was so unprecedented for SBS that it was aired a number of times and prompted Jane to come to Australia to produce "Stolen Eye" – a documentary featuring this experiment in Sydney.

Jane has an intimate knowledge of Aboriginal culture and the issues affecting Aboriginal people. She has been contacted and has agreed to address Open Eye.

The name of the conference is in honour of her work and infers or implores an open mind and eye to the problem by the members of the audience at the conference.

She will not conduct the experiment at the conference, as from experience with law enforcement agencies, they do not endear themselves to the exercise and close ranks, not showing emotion and refrain from participating in personal or emotional activities as per their training. Instead Jane will be screening some of her documentaries and some of their out takes and will engage the audience by giving an overview and explaining aspects of the films and how they pertain to Redfern/Waterloo and Australia and to different groups and professions.

This process will require the entire first day to complete (as per attached program document).

Education program kits will be presented to heads of Government/Industry/community organisations.

The ensuing two days will be filled with panels of experts on different aspects of Aboriginality and racism. Each of these will showcase a wide range of experience and views - all open to questions from the audience.

This will include legal and forensic professionals, Aboriginal culture experts, political and media analysts, members of the stolen generation, famous Aboriginals, elders, community members and affected parties from the Block, successful Aboriginal youth and individuals deeply affected by racism.

Because of the broad scope of the conference, the opportunity for diverse debate is limited and not every aspect of the problem will be fully addressed, but the purpose of the conference is as an initiation of a long-term process of awareness and education. This will be the catalyst for more vigorous debate and a more measured response from organisational and community leaders to tackle the problem. This will take place through focussed campaigns of awareness, education and rectification through their communities or organisations (**Phase Two**). Even though many already do have such measures in place, the intense/confronting nature of the conference will ensure a more intimate knowledge of the problem by the audience and subsequently a stronger and more measured pro-active response will result rather than many of the basic campaigns currently in place. Leaders have to learn to lead rather than to respond to bigoted self interest generated by ignorance, fear or more sinister motives of broad sections of the media, public, individuals within and organisations as a whole.

The public must be confronted and compelled to change their preconceptions and deep seated bigotry and ignorance through intense, challenging education. This can be in the form of Jane Elliott's experiments or documentaries, historical presentation of the development of this cancerous social disease, films and powerful accounts by famous people of their struggles with racism, but most importantly any way of achieving an "...in their shoes..." understanding of the problem as Jane achieved by shocking and shaming people into REAL change.

Seeing a white child cry because of the pain of racist denigration, feeling belittled because of your own difference – understanding that it's not so easy to just "...get a job...", to "...get a degree...", to look after your health, dignity or homes when all has been stripped or taken from you.

This empathy can only be felt in a very small way by experiencing it first hand – this is the quantum shift that has to occur in educational campaigns for there to be any measurable change.

This shift via intense campaigns has to occur concurrently throughout the workplace by unions, employer groups, industry bodies, Government institutions/corporations, Law Enforcement Agencies, legal institutions, media, educational bodies and institutions, community groups and numerous other organisations that have the opportunity to facilitate change.

To assist these groups to respond effectively to this challenge, a support mechanism spanning different Government departments must be established. This can take the form

of educational courses and supporting educational packages to form a cohesive, uniform and non-ambiguous format that is relatively seamless across all segments of society. The Legislative Council has shown its strong commitment to tackling the social problems in the Redfern/Waterloo area, but this must translate into a powerful response and active involvement from Government departments such as Aboriginal Affairs, Education, Police, the Premier's Department, Social Services, Correctional Services and Health. We require their help via all the above-mentioned programs but also financial commitment to help initiate the process via our conference and future Open Eye programs.

We have received tacit support from the chief of police and the Premier's department and have had a powerfully positive response to the concept from experts and affected parties. Our financial assistance will be required for venue hire, catering, audio-visual equipment, printing, air-fares, accommodation, fees and other speaker-related costs, administrative costs, education package production costs, promotional/marketing costs and individual course program package costs.

Such support is not only a positive social response by the Government for the Aboriginal community and that of Redfern/Waterloo, but in the long term macro perspective can be an extremely cost-effective venture. If the desired results are forthcoming, cross departmental/portfolio budgetary reductions will be very significant. This cannot be a primary motivation for such commitments, but obviously will be an important factor in any Government dedication of resources considering the many and varied pressures on its finances.

Thank you for your consideration.  
Kind regards,

Robert MacGregor and Duncan (T.J.) Berry

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**OPEN EYE**  
**Police/Judiciary/Politician Educational program on Aboriginal  
culture and institutionalised bigotry**

**Day One**

**8.00 am Attendee arrival** Light breakfast snacks, tea, coffee & juice served

**8.30 am Opening Address:** Program Outline and subject synopsis by course coordinator/host

**8.45 am Introduction of Jane Elliott**

**9.00 am Blue-Eyed Screened**

**10.30 am Jane Elliott overview**

**10.45 am Recess (15 min)**

**11.00 am A Class Divided/Angry Eye?**

**12.00 am Jane Elliott overview**

**12.15 am The Stolen Eye Screened**

**1.10 pm Jane Elliott overview**

**1.30 pm lunch (1/2 hour)**

**2.00 pm Lecture by Jane**

**3.30 pm tea (15 min)**

**3.45 pm Continuation of Lecture by Jane**

**5.30 pm Questions & de-brief**

**6.30 pm (1/2 hour) Host thanks Jane – gives gift – she hands heads of Government/Industry/community organisations, education program kits**

## Day Two

**8.00 am Attendee arrival** Light breakfast snacks, tea, coffee & juice served

**8.30 am Morning Address** Day 2 Outline by course coordinator/host

**8.45 am Jane Elliott introduces Stolen Eye Participants** Participants in Stolen Eye relate their experience to the audience with Jane explaining the reactions and how it relates to the broader racist context in the community and government agencies.

**10.45 am Recess (15 min)**

**11.00 am Introduction of a panel of Aboriginal lawyers/Magistrates/legal experts; Coroners & Forensic experts**

**1.00 pm Question Time**

**1.30 am Lunch**

**2.00 pm Introduction of panel of Aboriginal culture experts**

**3.00 pm Question Time**

**3.30 pm Tea**

**3.45 pm Introduction of panel of Political and media analysts**

**5.45 pm Question Time**

**6.30 pm Aboriginal dance/music performance (1/2 hour)**

### Day Three

**8.00 am Attendee arrival** Light breakfast snacks, tea, coffee & juice served

**8.30 am Morning Address** Day 3 Outline by course coordinator/host

**8.45 am Members of the Stolen Generation Introduced**

**10.45 am Recess (15 min)**

**11.00 am Introduction of famous Aboriginals to relate their journeys and stories**

**1.00 pm Question Time**

**1.30 am Lunch**

**2.00 pm “The Block”** A panel of elders, community members and affected parties debate the subject

**3.30 pm Tea**

**3.45 pm “The Block” (Continued)**

**4.30 pm Question Time**

**5.30 pm Introduction of high achieving aboriginal youth**

**6.30 pm Closing ceremony**