

**Submission
No 44**

**INQUIRY INTO OVERCOMING INDIGENOUS
DISADVANTAGE**

Name: Mr Ross Smith

Date received: 31/01/2008

Submission

To

Closing the Gap – Overcoming Indigenous Disadvantage.

conducted by the Social Issues Committee of the NSW Legislative Council

from

Ross Smith

P.O. Box 1899

Strawberry Hills 2012

I consent to this submission being published – Ross Smith

This submission goes to matters referred to in Social Issues Committee recommendations containing reference to Aboriginal people, and government responses as set out in the Terms of Reference 1(c) - previous Social Issues committee reports containing reference to Aboriginal people – and assess the progress of government in implementing adopted report recommendations.

The particular report referred to in this submission is ***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.

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 Inquiry provides an opportunity to revisit aspects of the *Redfern and Waterloo Inquiry* that relate to Aboriginal people.

In the interests of brevity I have reproduced straight from the original report the recommendations and put comment underneath each individual recommendation.

In the interests of traceability and ease of reference to the original Report, I have retained the original Headings

Contents by Subject Heading:

DoCs to make Changes

Page 4

Education Priorities

Page 5

Human Services Plan

[a] Morgan Disney & Preparation of the HSP by May 2005

Pages 6 to 13

**[b] Take all possible steps to achieve genuine partnership & effective consultation
communication and Capacity building**

Pages 14 to 17

DoCs to make Changes

Recommendation 12

Page 93

That the Department of Community Services' Eastern Sydney Community Service Centre take the following actions, as a matter of priority:

- establish a process for allocating and responding to level two and level three cases
- ensure adequate training and support for caseworkers, to optimise professional practice

Talking with parents in the area this has not been achieved

- build its relationships with other agencies through better case coordination and interagency participation, including with non government agencies and at the caseworker level
- build its relationship with the Aboriginal community of Redfern and Waterloo through a more collaborative approach with Aboriginal families and service providers, and interagency participation.

Talking with people in the area this has not been achieved. If anything the situation has gone backwards

Overall I do not believe that this recommendation has been implemented

Education Priorities

Recommendation 19

Page 114

That the Department of Education ensure, as a priority, that there are:

- comprehensive strategies in place in Redfern and Waterloo to address truancy, suspensions and exclusions
- adequate transport services to enable children from Redfern and Waterloo to attend Alexandria Park Community School.

Overall I do not believe that these recommendations have been implemented. Education has created the concept of "Condoned Truancy" versus "Truancy" to avoid the absolute figures of numbers of children not in physical attendance revealing the true picture of an alarmingly high level of ongoing non-attendance.

Human Services Plan

Morgan Disney & Preparation of the HSP by May 2005

IR Recommendation 21

136

That the NSW Government, through the Redfern/Waterloo Partnership Project, liaise with the Central Sydney Area Health Service, relevant Aboriginal organisations and representatives from the Aboriginal community, to ensure there are adequate referral services for Aboriginal people with drug and alcohol problems in Redfern and Waterloo. In particular, consideration should be given to the feasibility of establishing detoxication and other drug and alcohol related services, particularly for Aboriginal people, at the Rachel Foster Hospital site or another appropriate site.

This is a non-event. There has been no effective supply of services and the proposed site has been sold by the Redfern Waterloo Authority acting under instruction from the owner. Other Health Services properties in Pitt Street are slated for sale.

Recommendation 18

Page 109

That in implementing the recommendations of the Human Services Review, the Redfern Waterloo Partnership Project ensure the immediate development of a drug and alcohol services plan and a mental health services plan. Both must provide for adequate local services and culturally appropriate services.

This is a non-event. Area Health Services has only recently come up to a full staff level - five employees. The evidence visible on the streets says that whatever has been done is not reducing the impact on the person with problem and/or the community in general. A prime current example of a location to see this failure is the Waterloo Green

Recommendation 14

Page 98

That, in keeping with Recommendation 8 of this Report concerning the approval and expedition of a process for renovating or improving the facilities of services, the Redfern Waterloo Partnership Project immediately consider the adequacy of accommodation for youth services in the area. In particular, the Partnership Project should ensure a speedy resolution of the issue of relocating the Fact Tree Youth Service to more appropriate facilities.

This has not happened in general. The RWA has failed to support local NGOs in their search for premises in general. A particular case was an NGO forced to relocate when RWA facilitated the sale of the premises that they were the historic tenants of. The RWA did actively deny any form of obligation to assist.

The Fact Tree Youth Service is still occupying the same premises.

Recommendation 15**Page 98**

That in developing a Youth Services Plan, the Redfern Waterloo Partnership Project and other members of the Youth Taskforce ensure that there is adequate provision for weekend and after hours youth services, including recreational activities.

Another non-event to date. The demise of the ill-fated Street Team saw the last vestige of compliance with this recommendation. The release of the Report into the failure of the Street Team project was declared exempt from supply when an FOI request was lodged by a local community group - REDWatch.

Recommendation 11**Page 84**

That the NSW Government, in liaison with the non government agencies in Redfern and Waterloo, recognise and resource a local body to represent the non government sector and act as a negotiation point with government in developing and implementing the Human Services Plan.

The details of this body and membership criteria of same have not been released as of yet to the best of my knowledge.

Recommendation 25**Page 137**

That the NSW Government, through the Redfern Waterloo Authority, as a matter of urgency, conduct an audit of the Government assets in the Redfern and Waterloo area, and publish this audit including an itemised list identifying and describing the assets. The Redfern Waterloo Authority should ensure that any development of these assets is done in consultation with the Redfern and Waterloo communities, and that monies raised in the development of these assets go directly to addressing the needs of the area.

There has been no consultation in the accepted meaning and/or form of the word 'consultation' to date conducted by the RWA. Coffee and biscuits with selected individuals does not constitute consultation.

Neither does the offer of an opportunity to make comment on a Plan or project which has been drawn up, signed off, and put out for comment,

There is room to believe that the monies raised were in some cases spent on duplicating already existing services at the expense of the demise of other services.

An example being the sale of the Rachel Forster Hospital site which contained a large Community Health Centre, an enclosed hydro-therapy pool, hospital facilities including wards and operating theatres,

Community meeting spaces et al with the proceeds being used to provide another Community Health Centre on the site of the Redfern Police

Station complete with holding cells, and the Redfern Courthouse. Overall the community lost a Courthouse, Police Station and existing Hospital complete with all associated facilities in exchange for a Community Health Centre. The police are now operating out of rented facilities without the former benefit of adequate holding cells.

Recommendation 28

Page 141

That the NSW Government, through the Redfern Waterloo Authority, ensure that all future commercial or residential development applications of scale are subject to a comprehensive social impact assessment process.

How and by whom the Social Impact Assessments were done, if at all, is a true mystery to the people of the area.

Recommendation 20

Page 119

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.

Whilst the Department of Housing may well be seeking ways, it has not been successful in implementing a functional scheme producing results, The recent Waterloo Green Safety Audit conducted by NSW Police's

Redfern LAC very clearly demonstrates that. and highlights a failure to effectively monitor Contractor performance.

Recommendation 21

Page 119

That the Redfern Waterloo Authority and the Department of Housing ensure that the process of redevelopment of public housing proceeds with extreme care in order to protect the rights of tenants and the Government's duty of care towards them. In particular, consultation, information sharing and maximum tenant choice must all be ensured.

Compliance with this recommendation has not happened to date. The RWA has categorically stated that they will not be following the Best Practice model developed for same as implemented for the DoH Bonnyrigg large scale redevelopment. This model was developed after the lessons from the DoH Minto redevelopment had emerged and been comprehended.

Recommendation 26

Page 140

That the NSW Government, through the Redfern Waterloo Authority, consult with current public housing tenants on any future plans to redevelop public housing stock.

If 'consultation' consists of asking individuals in a one on one situation what Human Services they would like to see implemented when the Waterloo Housing Estate is redeveloped, then the RWA did "consult"

Recommendation 27

Page 140

That the NSW Government, through the Redfern Waterloo Authority, consider measures to ensure the provision of affordable housing and allow for affordable housing targets.

The absence of a requirement to implement any measures makes this a toothless tiger

Recommendation 31

Page 155

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.

The assessment and evaluation process should be expanded to include financial analysis with inclusion of cost per capita of services provided, clear identification of benefit delivered and clear identification of how

successful the Plan(s) were in making the individual service recipient able to function without further support and thus freeing up resources and funding for use for benefit of others.

Recommendation 22

Page 125

That the Redfern Waterloo Partnership Project and the City of Sydney Council, in consultation with the Redfern and Waterloo community, develop 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.

A non event to date from the RWA side, especially in relation to the funding component. . See the RWA Annual Report 2006_07 and the response supplied by RWA in the recent Estimates Hearings of the NSW Parliament.

Take all possible steps to achieve genuine partnership & effective consultation communication and Capacity building

IR Recommendation 2

33

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.

The RWA has failed to do so to date. The RWA has not achieved a genuine partnership with the local community to date. The word 'Partnership' requires mutual trust and two way communication in an open manner between all parties to a Partnership. The RWA does not trust the local community and there is no open meaningful two way dialogue as such.

Recommendation 36

Page 163

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 RWA has failed to do so to date . The RWA has not achieved a genuine partnership with the local community to date. The word 'Partnership' requires mutual trust and two way communication in an open manner between all parties to a Partnership. The RWA does not trust the local community and there is no open meaningful two way dialogue as such.

IR Recommendation 3

33

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.

The RWA has failed miserably in implementation of any developed strategies to date. In some cases i.e the Aboriginal Housing Cooperative, the RWA Minister has gone on record as having a hostile attitude to the CEO and a project of the organisation. This public position has had ramifications within the Aboriginal community, as well as the larger community of the area.

That the Department of Education ensure, as a priority, that there are:

- comprehensive strategies in place in Redfern and Waterloo to address truancy, suspensions and exclusions
- adequate transport services to enable children from Redfern and Waterloo to attend Alexandria Park Community School.

Overall I do not believe that these recommendations have been implemented. Education has created the concept of "Condoned Truancy" versus "Truancy" to avoid the absolute figures of numbers of children not in physical attendance revealing the true picture of an alarmingly high level of ongoing non-attendance.

That the NSW Government, through the Redfern/Waterloo Partnership Project, liaise with the Central Sydney Area Health Service, relevant Aboriginal organisations and representatives from the Aboriginal community, to ensure there are adequate referral services for Aboriginal people with drug and alcohol problems in Redfern and Waterloo. In particular, consideration should be given to the feasibility of establishing detoxication and other drug and alcohol related services, particularly for Aboriginal people, at the Rachel Foster Hospital site or another appropriate site.

This is a non-event. There has been no effective supply of services and the proposed site has been sold by the Redfern Waterloo Authority acting under instruction from the owner. Other Health Services properties in Pitt Street are slated for sale.

Recommendation 18

Page 109

That in implementing the recommendations of the Human Services Review, the Redfern Waterloo Partnership Project ensure the immediate development of a drug and alcohol services plan and a mental health services plan. Both must provide for adequate local services and culturally appropriate services.

This is a non-event. Area Health Services has only recently come up to a full staff level - five employees. The evidence visible on the streets says that whatever has been done is not reducing the impact on the person with problem and/or the community in general. A prime current example of a location to see this failure is the Waterloo Green

I consent to this submission being published

Ross Smith