

## INQUIRY INTO PUBLIC DISTURBANCES AT MACQUARIE FIELDS

**Organisation:**

**Name:** Mr Rodney Edwards

**Telephone:**

**Date Received:** 7/12/2005

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**Theme:**

**Summary**

The Rescue Report  
Inquiry into Public disturbances at Macquarie Fields  
6<sup>th</sup> December 2005

Report by R. Edwards  
Inquiry into Public disturbances at Macquarie Fields  
Presented to the Standing Committee on Social Issues December 2005



# The Rescue Report

Metaphorically speaking the reason that we have battle fields springing up all over the place is because our current mindset is totally focused upon attempting to put out the fires with petrol instead of water. For just a moment image that this was a pipeline of oil or gas, do you attempt to plug up the wholes and beat back the flames when the pressure valve has not been turned off?

Perhaps not, to do so would be madness as this would only provide added pressure upon the actual pipeline that would surely find new weak spots to break through and hence create even more fires. Therefore we can continue going down the same path attributed to using our Police Force as a weapon in an attempt to beat out the flames of discontent. However, if we do so then we must be prepared for the firestorm this response will create.

Hence for each innocent individual the Police beat with a baton or lock up in Jail will spurn new resentment and anger. Make no mistake, this resentment and anger will continue to grow. For each innocent individual you turn into an enemy will become a voice of discontent that will summon others to their cause. From many a field they will come to aid those they know. Do the same to these individuals and the revolt will grow so large that it will become metaphorically a revolution the likes of which Australia has never seen. Perhaps in this regard we can now look no further then the recent events of France.

## Parliamentary Inquiry

Inquiry - Public disturbances at Macquarie Fields

This inquiry is a current Legislative Council inquiry conducted by the Social Issues Committee.

This inquiry was referred to the Committee by the Hon Carl Scully MP, Minister for Police, on 17 March 2005. On 23 March 2005, the terms of reference were amended by the House (Item 9, Minutes No.96). The House subsequently instructed the Committee to delay the commencement of the Inquiry until the conclusion of police operational review and police investigations.

Satisfied that the terms of the instruction from the House had been met, on 19 September 2005 the Committee resolved to commence the inquiry by calling for submissions

## Members of the Parliamentary Committee

- The Hon Jan BURNSWOODS MLC (ALP, Legislative Council)
- The Hon Dr Arthur CHESTERFIELD-EVANS MLC (Dem, Legislative Council)
- The Hon Kayee GRIFFIN MLC (ALP, Legislative Council)
- The Hon Charlie LYNN MLC (Lib, Legislative Council)
- The Hon Robyn PARKER MLC (Lib, Legislative Council)
- The Hon Ian WEST MLC (ALP, Legislative Council)

## Inquiry Terms of Reference

Minister for Police and Resolution passed 23 March 2005, Minutes No.96, Item 9

That the Standing Committee on Social Issues enquire into, and report on, the public disturbances at Macquarie Fields, and in particular on:

- 1) Policing strategies and resources in the Macquarie Fields area, particularly in the immediate period leading up to and following the motor vehicle accident involving two fatalities on 25 February 2005
- 2) Government programs and service provision in the Macquarie Fields area, including local, state and federal programs
- 3) Non-government services and service provision in the Macquarie Fields area
- 4) Whether the lessons learned from the Social Issues Committee and Coburn Reports resulting from the Redfern disturbance, have been utilised in this incident
- 5) The underlying causes and problems which may have contributed to individual and collective acts of violence and social disorder, and
- 6) Any other matters arising from these Terms of Reference

The Committee Manager  
Standing Committee on Social Issues  
Parliament House  
Macquarie Street  
Sydney NSW 2000.

Dear Committee Manager/Members of the Committee,

By introduction my name is Rodney Edwards and I would like to present a few concepts and ideas for possible consideration that I truly hope may prove of beneficial value in the Committees attempts at finding a solution to task at hand.

It is acknowledged that my presentation is certainly different. It includes strategies and concepts vastly different to what was perhaps anticipated. Despite this fact, it is hoped that the contents attributed to this submission will aid in finding a viable solution to the various issues raised by each of the stakeholders.

That said, my attempts to get all the main players involved in pursuing such an outcome can be likened to a flea attempting to tell a group of sitting elephants to stand up and take notice of their surroundings. Although this may seem an impossible task, this flea has not yet given up.

It is a sad fact that the reason we have major problems in this State is primarily due to the complacency of our Politicians and Bureaucracy. Hence, the identity of the "Dark masked enemy", that so threatens our glorious State, is in fact "Complacency".

For the Politicians complacency lies amongst those who stand upon a platform, yet upon entering the Parliament follow the road attributed to being witty and perceived as clever, yet do nothing much of any substance.

As for the bureaucracy, complacency encourages self survival and discourages innovation. It is this point attributed to innovation that I now wish to address.

In order to destroy this enemy of contempt and despair, the weapon to use is a vision of a new hope and goal in life.

What I am suggesting is that you consider rebuilding Macquarie Fields. Don't just destroy the buildings and disperse the population amongst the rest of society as this will not resolve anything only create additional problems for our societies.

The solution I put forward is for you to approach allies in the building industry and seek out those with the expertise to build a house. Then approach the community of Macquarie Fields and offer them the opportunity to design a new estate. Seek the communities input into what they would like including the houses they need and the designs they would like.

Naturally, there has to be logic in this process as a million dollar house is not going to be on offer. However, input into the design and look of the housing is important. Added to this can be other suggestions in relation to trees, gardens etc.

Upon completion of this stage the next process is to offer the community the opportunity to become involved. Those who wish to participate in obtaining a new house and remaining within the Macquarie Fields community should be asked to step forward and let their names be recorded. Those who wish to leave the estate should be granted leave to do so and hence transferred to other Departmental dwellings elsewhere.

The next phase is to build but one building at a time. The logic behind this is that in order to achieve a mighty river you must first start with a small stream. Offer the youth in Macquarie Fields the opportunity to become involved in building the House. Use the expertise of those in the business to direct their labour efforts. Even though you may initially only get just one person to participate, the example they will become in the longer term will be a bright and shining light to others.

For if but one of their fellow piers successfully escapes the shackles of poverty and commences to have a more rewarding life style, then they will become a beacon for others to follow. In this regard the music industry especially that connected to the "rap" scene has many such examples emanating out of the United States

As in this example if upon the youth and others participating in the building of the estate, talent is recognised in regard to skills that could be further grown within the building industry, then the next phase is to offer apprenticeships to those individuals who demonstrate such skills and eagerness to participate.

Note that it would be wrong to offer this as an option in the first instance. Let this spring out of their efforts; recognise what the people can do once they have established a goal and a reason to live their lives.

Naturally there are going to be elements of this community that will be against such activity. In this regard it is important for the Community it's self to sort out the sheep from the goats. Don't go down the path of bringing in the Police to attack those goats that will at first destroy the initial House. Just go back and start rebuilding it again and again and again and again if this is the case.

Eventually if you proceed down this path the Community should rally behind the effort to build the first house and they themselves should then proceed to protect this prized possession. Once this objective has been reached it is vital that the Police and Court System fully support the Community by addressing any antisocial activities. From this point in time the strategy is to proceed building the next house and so on.

If upon what you have read is of interest to you, then I would ask for your assistance in achieving this vision. In order to achieve such a proposal support will be required from both the State and Federal Governments, perhaps something to consider upon the next COAG meeting.

At the Federal level consideration needs to be given to adjusting all allowances under the Social Security Act to have included the provision for participation in such projects. Perhaps it is time to rethink the mechanism that supports individuals who are willing to do the hard yards in obtaining skilled training qualifications such as apprenticeships. Perhaps instead of always throwing such people on the scrap heap of life we need to allow them to grow.

Secondly, all individuals who become involved with such projects need to be recognised for their efforts. In relation to the payment of their benefits perhaps this should be doubled. As for those individuals who participate in the rebuilding of Macquarie Fields estate, their efforts should be recognised with provision of an employer reference upon successful completion of the tasks presented to them. This particular outcome is achievable at the State level. In this regard an employer reference that recognises the individual's talent and ability could prove to be an invaluable asset to an individual, especially if such references aided in securing future employment.

In addition, should individuals sprout from this effort that demonstrate to the Building experts that they possess the necessary skills and enthusiasm to go on and work in the building industry, then this should ultimately lead to a fully subsidised apprenticeship. Perhaps in this regard it should be noted that this situation could be expanded to cater for apprenticeship opportunities from many diverse trades. Notably the prior Premier Robert Carr MP and Minister for Education Ms Carmel Tebbutt MP have been looking into how TAFE NSW could perhaps meet some of the needs to address the current skills shortage.

Hopefully the contents of the report will greatly assist in clarifying the need for change.

Yours sincerely



Rodney Edwards

Additional supporting pages include:

- Letter from Ms Cherie Burton Minister for Housing to R. Edwards dated 7<sup>th</sup> October 2005
- Letter from Minister Tripodi MP to R. Edwards dated 8<sup>th</sup> August 2005
- Copy of Department of Housing response to Minister Tripodi MP dated 8<sup>th</sup> August 2005
- Letter from Ms Leonello Executive Officer to R. Edwards dated 11<sup>th</sup> July 2005
- Letter to Minister Tripodi MP from R. Edwards dated 10<sup>th</sup> June 2005
- Letter to Ms Angela Leonello Executive Officer for Minister of Housing, from R. Edwards dated 15<sup>th</sup> April 2005

**Cherie Burton MP**

Minister for Housing  
Minister Assisting the Minister for Health (Mental Health)

H35999  
M05/02533

Mr Rodney Edwards

- 7 OCT 2005

Dear Mr Edwards

I refer to your letter to the Hon Joe Tripodi MP, concerning the changes to public housing and take the opportunity to thank you for the comments and suggestions you have made.

With regard to your comments about the introduction of water charges, the Department of Housing considers it fair and reasonable to ask public housing tenants to now take responsibility for their own water use – an obligation most tenants in both community housing and private rental accommodation currently meet.

The Department will continue to pay for the connection of sewerage and maintenance charges. Tenants will pay for water usage in small instalments at the same time as rent.

For Department of Housing properties that do not have separate water meters, the Department will require a payment based on a percentage of the tenant's net rent, and not the flat rate of \$5.00 per week, as you mentioned in your letter. This percentage has not yet been determined. Where appropriate, the Department will also install water saving devices in properties.

Any money saved through this change will be reinvested in the public housing system to build, purchase or renovate 30,000 homes over the next 10 years.

In the meantime, I have referred your comments to the Department for further consideration.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Cherie Burton', with a large, stylized flourish at the end.

**Cherie Burton MP**  
Minister for Housing  
Minister Assisting the Minister for Health (Mental Health)



**Joseph Tripodi**  
Minister for Housing

H35213  
M05/01442

Mr Rodney Edwards

- 8 AUG 2005

Dear Mr Edwards

I refer to your correspondence concerning your comments and suggestions regarding the Department of Housing's Macquarie Fields estate and the redevelopment of other estates.

I appreciate your reasons for writing to me. On receiving your correspondence, I arranged for the matters raised to be investigated. As a result the Department has prepared a report for me. I have attached a copy for your information. I trust that report goes some way to addressing your concerns.

Thank you for bringing this matter to my attention.

Should you require any further assistance in this matter, please do not hesitate to contact Bob Timmis, Manager, Housing Operations of the Department's South Western Sydney Area on telephone 4629 3207.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Joe Tripodi".

**Joe Tripodi**  
Minister for Housing

Enc.



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NSW DEPARTMENT OF



H35213  
M05/01442

The Hon Joe Tripodi MP  
Minister for Housing  
Level 25  
9 Castlereagh Street  
SYDNEY NSW 2000

- 8 AUG 2005

Dear Minister

I refer to your enquiry on behalf of Mr Rodney Edwards of PO Box 3, Avoca Beach concerning his comments and suggestions regarding the Department of Housing's Macquarie Fields estate and the redevelopment of other estates.

The Department has expended approximately \$30 million on upgrading work on the Macquarie Fields estate since 1996, under the Community Regeneration Scheme. This is part of an overall strategy to ensure the long term viability of the Department's housing stock and raise the condition of its portfolio to meet contemporary standards. The overarching objective of the redevelopment is to enhance the quality of life of residents of large public housing estates by the provision of better homes and neighbourhoods. The involvement of key stakeholders including residents, authorities and human service providers is an integral element of this redevelopment.

The Department is committed to improving consultation processes which are clearly a key element of any redevelopment project and will build on the lessons learned from renewal projects such as Minto. The Department is also in the process of assessing options for future directions in the Macquarie Fields estate and in this context input from interested people such as Mr Edwards is certainly welcome. The Department is also keen to play a lead role in a better coordinated strategic response to some of the social issues highlighted in recent times and will be consulting widely with both government and non-government service providers and local residents in this regard.

I trust this information is of assistance to Mr Edwards.

Leonie King  
Director  
Office of the Director-General



Office of the  
Minister for Housing

H35999  
M05/02533

11 July 2005

Mr Rodney Edwards

Dear Mr Edwards

I am writing to acknowledge receipt of your correspondence concerning changes in public housing.

Mr Tripodi has arranged for the matters raised to be examined and a response will be provided as soon as possible.

Yours sincerely

*A. Leonello*  
**Angela Leonello**  
Executive Officer  
Ministerial Coordination Unit

The Hon. Joseph Guerino Tripodi MP  
Minister for Housing  
Topic: Water reform and payment options

The Hon. Joseph Guerino Tripodi MP  
Minister for Housing  
Level 25, 9 Castlereagh Street  
Sydney NSW 2000

Dear Minister,

By introduction my name is Rodney Edwards and I am the person responsible for the philosophy and strategy for consideration in relation to Water reform that is currently being assessed by both members of your Government and the IPART.

In addition to this strategy, you will find that I also dispatched an alternative philosophy for consideration under your portfolio area (reference M05/1442). This was in relation to rebuilding of the Housing Estates and encouraging our youth to enter into apprenticeships.

However, that is not the topic of this letter. The topic that I wish to draw to your attention is related to the Governments strategy towards charging Public Housing Tenants for water usage.

In this regard, I trust that the concept of a "water survival clause" as mentioned within my IPART submissions has been mooted about the Cabinet Office. The theory was to establish a figure attributed to "x" amount of water to be supplied to people on low incomes each month for free. Note this concept was to apply to "all" welfare participants including those in the private rental market. Hence adoption of this proposal should aid your cause.

In addition the concept was designed to aid concerns raised by the Pricing Ombudsman Office, Local Shires Association and Public Interest Advocacy Centre. I did not attempt to nominate a particular figure in kilolitres per month as this has been left up to the IPART to decide.

Hence, I am hoping that you are a supporter of this concept as it should greatly complement the introduction of the estimated \$5.00 water charge to Public Housing Tenants.

I trust if nothing else the concepts presented maybe getting a few policy people thinking upon such a proposals and hence expanding upon the ideas already presented which would enhance the achievability of the overall philosophies presented.

Yours sincerely



Rodney Edwards  
10<sup>th</sup> June 2005

The Hon. Joseph Guerin MP  
Minister for Housing

Topic: Macquarie Fields Strategy for Consideration

Ms Angela Leonello  
Executive Officer  
Ministerial Coordination Unit  
Minister for Housing  
Sydney NSW 2000

Dear Ms Leonello,

I refer to your letter dated 12 April 2005 in relation to the philosophy and strategy for consideration by the Minister for Housing the Hon. Joseph Tripodi MP.

Please note that the concepts presented were not directly targeted at Macquarie Fields only, they were presented for consideration of use with "all" existing public housing estates. It is further noted that the Government's existing strategy is at direct odds to what has been presented, hence by example the Minister need only consider the problems being faced in the Minto area.

That said it is not the intention of this letter to criticise the existing failures attributed to the current system or strategy only to present an alternative for the Minister to consider. Please note that in this regard additional assistance has been sought from the Federal Government to aid in this cause as the pipeline of problems stem from factors attributed to both the Federal and State systems.

Further, I am well aware of the explosion of policy reform that occurred in relation to the apprenticeship concept. I would therefore more than welcome a similar stance in this regard. Hence if the concepts and strategy was proven beneficial it is hoped that the information would flow quite rapidly to the other States. However, what the Minister elects to do with what has been presented is totally up to him.

I trust if nothing else the concepts presented may have started a few policy people thinking upon such a proposal and hence expanding upon the ideas already presented which would enhance the achievability of the overall philosophy.

Yours sincerely



Rodney Edwards  
15<sup>th</sup> April 2005