

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

**Organisation:**

**Name:** Mr John Collins

**Telephone:**

**Date Received:** 21/07/2004

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**Theme:**

**Summary**

John Collins

28th June, 2004

Dear Lee Rhiannon, M.L.C.

POLICING AT THE BLOCK, REDFERN.

I enclose a report of events at Redfern that I observed when I worked in the area in 1998. The report includes details of maladministration by the Carr government regarding policing in the area and waste of money by health service.

Government neglect of social issues at the time culminated in the riot at Redfern in 2004.

I have offered this information to the current opposition and the Australian Democrats but they have shown little interest.

Would you please send my report to the Upper House Inquiry into Redfern and Waterloo.

Yours sincerely  
John Collins

To assist to police in the area to reduce response time to such emergencies a letter was delivered to the office of the Minister for Police suggesting that urgent consideration be given to a short term lease of Henry George House as a temporary police station. Copies went to the Police Commissioner, Properties Branch and Patrol Commander at Redfern.

The Redfern Patrol Commander, [REDACTED] expressed interest in the suggestion and said accommodation at Redfern Police Station was "awful". He said he would send [REDACTED] to inspect Henry George House on Friday 13 November, 1998. [REDACTED] considered the building was too big for a small police station and too small for a big one.

About 11 am on 13 November, 1998 [REDACTED] with other police including Community Policing Officer, [REDACTED], who is an aboriginal person, met with residents at THE BLOCK to discuss the drive-by shooting on 11 November. Some of the residents were very angry and blamed police for not protecting them and for removing the police van from Little Eveleigh Street two days before the shooting. Others criticised the police for harassing residents of THE BLOCK. Aboriginal activist\* [REDACTED] was ~~being~~ vocal among those criticising the police. Another man said the Minister for Police is a criminal who owns five pubs. He said police didn't have the guts to deal with big criminals. A well dressed aboriginal man who was probably a clergyman tried to calm the residents and [REDACTED] listened patiently to the angry crowd and asked them for suggestions on what they want police to do to improve safety in the community.

Police did not lease Henry George House, but with the permission of the owner they later installed a camera on the premises for surveillance of the area near THE BLOCK. On 16.11.98, RTA refused to confirm that the sponsored van BWY 050 was registered.

In 1999 H.G. House was leased to Central Sydney Area Health Service for 3 years @ \$60,000 per year. Redfern Residents

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4.11.04

JOHN COLLINS

## Policing at THE BLOCK, Redfern.

4th April, 2004

In February, 2004 forty police persons were injured in a seven hour battle with persons associated with the area known as THE BLOCK at Eveleigh Street Redfern.

For several years police have had difficulty maintaining law and order in this area which is a hotbed of alcohol and drug abuse, anti-social behaviour and serious crime.

Rapid response to incidents at the Block was hampered by its distance from Redfern Police station. <sup>Sept 1998</sup> Land was acquired from the local council to locate a demountable police post near Redfern Railway station but instead of the demountable, a privately sponsored police van BWY 080 with commercial advertising on it was parked illegally on the footway in Little Eveleigh Street near Lawson Street and THE BLOCK. No registration label was visible on the van. The van was sometimes manned by police who sat inside it watching television and sometimes the van remained there unmanned.

About 20 metres south of where the van was parked ~~is a substantial building at 122 Little Eveleigh Street.~~ In Little Eveleigh Street is a substantial building known as Henry George House. On 13 October, 1998, the Minister for Police, Paul Whelan was advised that the sponsored van was parked illegally and that an opportunity exists for police to lease Henry George House which was ideally located and equipped to improve law enforcement in the area. This information was passed on to the Police Commissioner, Police Properties Branch (and Redfern Patrol Commander later).

By 10 November 1998 the sponsored police van was removed from Little Eveleigh Street, possibly because it was unregistered. At about 3.40 am on 11 November, 1998 about a dozen bullets were fired into houses at THE BLOCK from a car. An aboriginal flag and a note were left at the scene.

Action Group objected to the building being used as a needle exchange centre and the Health Service never occupied the building, thereby wasting public money. (about \$150,000)

After the battle of Redfern in February, 2004 the state government was again offered the opportunity to lease Henry George House. The Minister for Police said the offer is ~~will be considered~~. "presently receiving attention."

*John Collins*

The Minister for Police on 26 Feb. 2004 reported that the offer is presently receiving attention.