

INQUIRY INTO ISSUES RELATING TO REDFERN/WATERLOO

Organisation: City of Sydney
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Position: Lord Mayor
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Date Received: 23/06/2004

Theme:

Summary



OFFICE OF THE LORD MAYOR

15 June 2004

The Hon Jan Burnswoods MLC
Chair, Social Issues Committee
Legislative Council
Parliament of NSW
Macquarie Street
Sydney NSW 2000

Dear Minister

Inquiry into Issues Relating to Redfern/Waterloo

At the City of Sydney Council meeting of Monday 7 June, the City resolved to make a submission to the Inquiry into issues relating to Redfern and Waterloo.

I appreciate that the closing date for submissions has passed. At the time of the call for submissions the City of Sydney Council was in the process of electing a new Council, following an amalgamation between the City and South Sydney Councils.

I welcome the opportunity to make this submission on behalf of Council, and look forward to reading the Committee's final report and recommendations.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading 'Clover Moore'. The signature is written in a cursive style. Below the signature is a horizontal line that starts under the signature and extends to the right, ending under the text 'Lord Mayor of Sydney'.

Clover Moore MP
Lord Mayor of Sydney

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Inquiry into issues relating to Redfern-Waterloo

May 2004

**Legislative Council – Standing Committee on Social Issues
Submission to the Inquiry into issues relating to Redfern-Waterloo from City of
Sydney (CoS)**

Inquiry into issues relating to Redfern-Waterloo

Introduction

The City of Sydney (CoS) seeks to achieve a community-centred approach to planning and services for the Redfern/Waterloo area, focusing on its strengths and positive assets. This submission presents the rationale behind some of Council's initiatives in the area as the basis for alternative approaches to working with the Redfern/Waterloo community.

Redfern/Waterloo has its own distinctive culture and history, but it is not unique. The area has much in common with other areas of high disadvantage. Redfern/Waterloo has high levels of:

- public housing;
- long-term unemployed people;
- drug and alcohol abuse;
- people suffering from mental illness; and
- Government funding that has not achieved real change.

Like other disadvantaged areas, Redfern/Waterloo demonstrates the failure of current social policy and the need for creative new ideas at all levels of Government.

A particular problem is that funds are too often problem-focussed or given in response to crises, not for prevention and community building. Redfern/Waterloo provides particular strengths for alternative approaches.

Redfern/Waterloo is a community where people from all walks of life know each other; participate in community organisations; and become involved in community events. Redfern/Waterloo includes many artists and small business people who love the local area and are committed to seeing it improved.

Redfern/Waterloo has potential to be promoted and enhanced as an urban village, blending the benefits of its proximity to the CBD with a lively, integrated, local community life.

Where we are now

The City of Sydney Council supports and is an active member of the Redfern/Waterloo Partnership Project (RWPP). It is vital that the RWPP continues and is refined over at least a decade so that real change will occur.

By attempting to take a 'place' approach to social issues, the RWPP aims to coordinate government agencies operating in and around the area. The difficulties involved in that coordination indicates that agencies are entrenched in current policies and operations.

The significant level of reform needed is demonstrated by the government agencies' inability to work in partnership, react quickly, be responsive, be pro-active and adapt to change. A significant reason for these problems is that government has not resolved the tension between a 'place' or 'holistic' approach to planning and service delivery, and a 'discipline' or 'silo' approach. Both approaches are needed, but we need to get them in balance.

Despite the commitment and hard work of its dedicated staff, the RWPP is a product of current social policy and Government approaches to social issues. As a partner in this project, the City of Sydney includes itself in this assessment.

The main weaknesses of the Partnership Project are that:

- the 'partners' are unfamiliar and unskilled at working in 'partnership';
- the approach has been very 'top down'; and
- there are no genuine business or community partners, with community and business indicating that they feel disenfranchised by the project.

The project's relationship with the community has been poor and its initiatives have not been community-driven. Staff report on the hundreds of people that have been consulted, but few people have been 'engaged'. Despite constant advocacy by City of Sydney Lord Mayor, Clover Moore, community members have not been asked to be **active participants** in addressing issues affecting their neighbourhoods. However, CoS notes that community consultation processes have improved. For example, the Human Services Review has involved a comprehensive consultation process.

The work of the RWPP over the past two years has highlight two key issues:

2. the problems of disadvantaged communities **cannot** be fixed by Government alone; and
3. government needs **new approaches to social policy** which are accompanied by structural change.

This is both a Government and a community problem, and the community needs to be a responsible, active and equal partner.

Role of the City of Sydney: What we are doing and what should happen

The City of Sydney Council, based on the work of the former South Sydney City Council continues to advocate a social policy approach, aimed at enabling the community to be active partners in change and characterised by the principles of:

1. Acting from within the community;
2. Respecting community knowledge;
3. Forming partnerships and facilitating Participation;
4. Demonstrating leadership;
5. Culturally driven regeneration;
6. Sustainability; and
7. Focussing on a shared future.

1. Acting from within the Community

The City of Sydney Council seeks to position itself **within the community**. This dismantles the 'us and them' mentality that results in Redfern/Waterloo patronisingly

positioned as the 'subjects' of research and passive receivers of "social welfare" and other "good works". This approach encourages professional relationships and enables staff to experience life in a community.

The revitalisation of the Redfern commercial and retail precinct will be assisted by the presence of the City of Sydney and its staff, together with the forthcoming occupation of the second TNT tower by the Redfern Local Area Command.

The former South Sydney City Council moved its administration to Redfern and City of Sydney has established a Neighbourhood Service Centre in the former administration building, with approximately 100 staff. A new Place Manager role has been established, focused entirely on community issues. Staff are actively encouraged to work alongside residents, whether cooking a BBQ or designing a new children's program.

This approach is more than a symbolic gesture—it contributes to the safety, economy and well-being of the place. However the symbolism is not lost on the community. People see that their Council and staff recognise themselves as part of the community, and that they are proud to live and work here.

Community policing is another example of working from within the community. The community places a high value on the efforts made by local police to get to know people, and on activities such as the youth mentoring program and youth camps run by the Redfern Local Area Command.

2. Respecting community knowledge

Respecting community knowledge means believing what people say; acting on this knowledge where possible; and explaining why, when it is not.

All levels of Government suffer from a profound inability to listen to the community and to comprehend the realities of community life.

Most people know what works for their community. Communities solve problems everyday without the help or intervention of Government. If we are serious about improving a place, we have to acknowledge the community's knowledge and be willing to listen and learn. If we are serious about working with communities from diverse cultural backgrounds, we also have to acknowledge that there are things we may not understand and may never understand.

The ***closure of the Redfern Public School*** was a significant example of Government not respecting community knowledge. Redfern Public School sits beside Department of Housing towers, in close proximity to two of the most densely populated areas in Redfern and Waterloo. The school was a short walk for most of the primary aged children that live in these suburbs.

Many children in this community are not parented in 'conventional' ways. Council and other organisations run programs to fill the gap left by absent parents or parents disabled by mental illness, drug and or alcohol abuse. Having a school and or a community facility in the heart of these suburbs is critical to the success of this community.

The building and site itself is ideally situated as a community hub and, consistent with the outstanding community education principles demonstrated by the new Alexandria Park Public School, Redfern Public School could continue to be the 'centre' that this

community needs. It is vital that this site be retained in public hands for future community facilities to meet the needs of this community.

An example of a project that does respect community knowledge is the **Community Safety Plan**. The Community Safety Plan was developed closely with community representatives. In developing the plan, Council and Premier's Department accepted what people said and felt about their community. The words and experiences of the community are written into the plan and the strategies reflect the action the community collectively believes are needed for change.

Another example of respecting community knowledge is the close relationship that Council is building with the Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal community in and around 'The Block'. Council spends many hours with local people and activities at the Redfern Community Centre are developed with residents' input.

3. Forming partnerships and enabling participation

The City of Sydney believes in working in partnership, but also understands that sometimes groups and individuals are not able or ready to be partners, so processes that facilitate participation are required.

'Partnership' is behind most of the activities of Council in Redfern/Waterloo. Every activity, if possible, will be developed and run with a community partner. There are 25 active partners running activities at the Redfern Community Centre. In addition Meals-on-Wheels is run with the Alleena Aboriginal Aged Service and recreation activities are run with Mental Health providers.

Two main themes run through our partnership work:

- building capacity; and
- creating experiences of success.

Building capacity means that, as a result of working in partnership, both Council and the Community emerge with greater knowledge and new and better skills.

Creating experiences of success means that activities are designed and set at an achievable level. A community that has low 'self esteem', and has its mistakes broadcast in the international media, does not need more negative experiences. City of Sydney staff work to ensure that activities lead to a positive experience. Events and programs are designed to minimise conflicts and anti-social behaviour.

Working in this way is challenging, slow, intensive and, unfortunately, invisible to those who do not appreciate what we are doing.

The Redfern/Waterloo Festival held last October is an example. To an outsider, this Festival was 'just another festival', but the former South Sydney Council invested months of community planning to create a day that involved many community organisations and tenant groups in a broad community celebration. Children's activities, a skate event, community BBQs and a concert, were all run without incident. Every aspect of the festival was discussed at community meetings and organised with community participants.

4. Demonstrating Leadership

The City of Sydney has a responsibility to be a leader in the community.

Leadership, in a disadvantaged, culturally diverse and volatile community, requires courage: the courage to take a stand, do things differently, take risks, and accept that mistakes will be made along the way.

One of the main ways that City of Sydney is demonstrating leadership is designing activities and programs in a way that active commitment and participation is required.

The children's programs the City is running and new programs it is designing include programs aimed at providing and modelling positive family experiences and building parenting skills.

At the Community Centre we require greater levels of participation. On Saturday 9 May, the City of Sydney held a community BBQ but, for the first time said "we will provide the food but we need volunteers to cook it", and "we will provide the drinks but we will charge for them". The BBQ was a success and raised some funds towards musical instruments for the community centre. It is a small, but essential, step toward working together and reciprocity.

Council showed leadership when it agreed to engage the Redfern Aboriginal Corporation (RAC) to undertake cleaning at 'The Block' and caretaking at the Redfern Community Centre and surrounding areas. Council made a commitment to local employment and to help develop a local business.

5. Culturally driven regeneration

'Cultural planning' refers to the process through which the cultural concerns of a community are integrated into the policies, strategies and planning instruments used to plan for, manage and develop a "place".

Cultural Planning can be used to help regenerate a community. It should underpin all social, community, land use and economic planning in Redfern/Waterloo.

A recognised form of Cultural Planning is heritage planning. Heritage studies that lead to Heritage lists, that become Heritage Local Environment Plans, ensure that items and places of cultural significance are protected in legislation.

However, the current application of cultural planning is limited and culturally biased. For example, NSW has thousands of items that represent our Colonial and British history, but very few that represent our more recent migrant history.

Other forms of cultural planning include creating planning instruments that are sensitive to the ways that diverse communities worship (eg the need for calls to prayer), or to the recreation needs of culturally diverse communities (eg not all communities BBQ in the same way and park design should reflect this).

Cultural planning focuses people on the positive things that make their communities distinct, contribute to a sense of place and give people a feeling of belonging.

A Cultural Plan would address:

- **Building self esteem through reconnection with cultural heritage**

People learn about themselves and experience a sense of belonging through activities that connect them with their cultural heritage, their loved ones and their communities. Family history groups and "Scrap Booking" are two examples of recreational activities that are growing in popularity.

Indigenous communities around the world also focus on regenerating cultural practices to rediscover or sustain important community knowledge that guides and binds their communities.

These projects have also led to economic outcomes through the development of distinct local products.

- **Connectivity**

A cultural planning process asks: When we move around our neighbourhood, what are the routes we use or don't use? Why? Which routes lead to positive interactions and which do not? How can we use this information to strengthen the connectivity of the neighbourhood when open space and traffic planning is undertaken?

- **Recognises the contribution that artists and cultural industries make to community life**

Artists and cultural industries tend to be active at a local level. They are often small businesses providing local employment. They commit to living and working in a place and provide activity and enterprise to a community.

Cultural planning recognises that investing in the cultural community can have a great impact on the wellbeing of the whole community and a cultural plan would address how to better support and work with the cultural community.

6. Sustainability

Sustainability must be a principle informing every decision made in Redfern/Waterloo. Work undertaken in the local community must be aimed at long-term sustainability, with the local community empowered to operate by itself with limited government intervention.

Sustainability must also apply to social and cultural concerns. Finding ways to ensure the Aboriginal population is sustained and able to grow is critical to the distinctiveness of the place. As a cultural plan is developed, it should show that a strong Aboriginal community is critical to the economic growth and viability of this community.

7. Focussing on a shared future

Community work must focus on the things that bring people together. In a strong and successful community, people look out for each other and everyone has a chance to reach their potential.

The City of Sydney models this principle through our commitment to Redfern and Waterloo and in the ways we work with the community. We do not pretend to have all the answers and will make mistakes, but the City is here for the long haul, has put its money where its mouth is, and believes that it is part of the future of this area. The City of Sydney shares in the successes of Redfern/Waterloo and shares responsibility in its failures.

Using Council's strengths

In working for real change in Redfern/Waterloo, the City of Sydney considers itself to be a partner with the community, State Government, Federal Government and non-government organisations.

The Premier has proposed that the City of Sydney, following the forced amalgamation of former South Sydney City Council and City of Sydney Councils could take a central role in addressing the issues affecting Redfern/Waterloo.

1. Close to the community

The City of Sydney, based on the work of the former South Sydney City Council, has a record of working closely with the Redfern/Waterloo communities. Many City of Sydney staff and councillors know local community members and have worked with them on solutions to local concerns.

This close relationship with local communities is a distinctive feature and strength of local government.

The new City of Sydney Council is committed to the development and enhancement of local 'villages' to enhance distinct community identities. The City will work with Redfern/Waterloo communities to reinforce the area's unique and diverse character.

2. Strengthening services

The City of Sydney has undertaken a broad range of projects and services in the Redfern/Waterloo area. Some of the key initiatives of Council are included in Attachment 1.

The amalgamation of South Sydney City Council with the City of Sydney was opposed by many people in the community who identified with their local council. The challenge for the new City of Sydney is to ensure that the best of the former councils is preserved and enhanced.

A particular opportunity following the amalgamation is to use the City of Sydney's strong financial position to ensure the long-term viability of needed services and facilities, in partnership with all levels of government and community organisations.

3. Planning and consent authority

The new City of Sydney has initiated a review of planning controls to ensure that three sets of planning controls inherited from the former City, South Sydney and Leichhardt Council are unified.

A particular focus of this review will be to develop planning controls that focus on the protection and amenity of existing and future residents, to create a more liveable environment, to preserve heritage and to provide clarity.

The controls provide an opportunity to address the physical environment of Redfern/Waterloo, in conjunction with city action to extend and enhance parks, foreshores, recreational spaces and the public domain.

4. Property owner

As the City of Sydney is a property owner in the Redfern Waterloo area, and consent authority, Council has the opportunity to guide the RED strategy for Redfern, Eveleigh, Darlington, Waterloo to ensure outcomes are responsive to community needs and concerns.

The revitalisation of the Redfern commercial and retail precinct will be assisted by the presence of the City of Sydney and its staff, and is a vote of confidence in the Redfern/Waterloo area.

Conclusion

Redfern/Waterloo is one of Australia's most disadvantaged communities because many people do not have what's needed for quality of life and a successful community:

- Decent and affordable housing;
- A job or adequate income;
- Health and security;
- A family or support network; and
- A place to belong.

City of Sydney staff working with the people of Redfern/Waterloo hear two strong messages from the local community. They are:

- sick of being portrayed as 'disadvantaged'; and
- sick of welfare.

Council has focused its efforts on creating opportunities for success so that people can see themselves as 'winners'. Council steers away from 'welfare' services and facilitates cultural recreation and job creation projects that focus on the community's assets not deficits.

Council is only one participant and partner. Council can help deliver mechanisms for affordable housing. It can do some projects around job creation. It can improve safety through its infrastructure projects and can play a big role in 'on the ground' projects, aimed at delivering community health messages and experiences of well being and belonging.

There are other things that really need to change, if things are going to improve in Redfern/Waterloo:

- We need an active community and business community that drives change;
- Government must make changes so that is spending in the area makes a difference; and
- We have to see ourselves as sharing the future and recognise that success will benefit all of us.

Government has recognised the need for a co-ordinated, partnership approach to addressing the complex and entrenched social issues facing the communities of Redfern and Waterloo. This partnership will only be successful if the community is actively and appropriately engaged to find innovative, community driven solutions to local issues.

Long term commitment through recurrent funding, an appropriately structured human service network, well-designed community spaces and a whole of government approach are all important strategies in addressing the disadvantage experienced by the communities of Redfern and Waterloo. However, Council believes that it is genuine community participation, above all these things, that will achieve real and sustainable solutions for our community.

Recommendations:

1. That the NSW Government ensures that the Redfern/Waterloo Partnership Project continues for at least ten years, with stronger and formalised partnership arrangements with the community and business.
2. That the NSW government ensure that the Commonwealth Government and the City of Sydney are equal active partners in the Redfern/Waterloo Partnership Project.
3. That all social service delivery be reviewed to include principles of reciprocity, where people receiving support services are actively enabled to contribute to the community.
4. That the Redfern/Waterloo Partnership Project give priority to employment and training, through a taskforce immediately set-up and funded, with a project officer dedicated to the process.
5. That the State Government urgently implement new drug and alcohol services in Redfern/Waterloo to ensure a comprehensive range of prevention, harm minimisation and rehabilitation programs.
6. That all levels of Government visibly locate offices and operational staff in the Redfern/Waterloo area, including the long awaited relocation of the Redfern Police Station to a building adjacent to the Railway Station.
7. That the State Government redress the insecurity of funding and low levels of wages for community service workers, to ensure a network community workers that can make a long term commitment to the community.
8. That the State Government and the City of Sydney jointly fund a comprehensive cultural planning process in Redfern/Waterloo.
9. That the State and Federal Governments expedite negotiations with the Aboriginal Housing Company and begin redeveloping 'The Block', ensuring financial viability, appropriate design, good tenant management and effective governance.

10. That the State and Commonwealth Government fund the Children's services being run by the City of Sydney in Redfern and Waterloo, recognising that 'conventional' after school and school holiday services would not normally be funded through local council.
11. That the State Government reviews legislation, guidelines and support for Children's Services, Child Protection, Privacy, Public Liability and Workers Compensation to provide better protection for organisations and community workers who provide 'unconventional' services in high risk areas.
12. That the State Government use the Rachel Forster Hospital and Redfern Public School sites as public assets to provide facilities and space for community organisations, services and activities to build strong communities.

Attachment 1

Projects undertaken by City of Sydney

The City of Sydney Council (CoS) is deeply committed to improving the quality of life of people living in Redfern and Waterloo. Some of the key initiatives that Council is undertaking in the suburbs of Redfern and Waterloo include the following:

- CoS (initiated by former South Sydney Council), has maintained the administrative presence in Redfern since October 2003. Approximately 150 staff (including many community service staff) work from the Redfern Neighbourhood Centre. This initiative alone has already contributed to the local economy and safety in the area.
- A planned upgrade of Redfern Street valued at 8 million dollars. New paving, smart poles for improved lighting and banners and widened footpaths will assist local business, create more opportunities for outdoor and evening dining and contribute to community safety. The project will provide for better visual amenity, a more pedestrian friendly environment, enliven retail activity, improve road safety through traffic calming measures and encourage bicycle usage.
- The construction and refurbishment of Redfern Community Centre valued at \$3.2 million. This centre is adjacent to "The Block" and community consultation determined that the centre should be an open access facility with an emphasis on art, culture, employment and training initiatives. Currently the centre offers a range of programs including:
 - after school and holiday activities for local children;
 - a mobile play bus and 3 playgroups a week;
 - a weekly "Aunties" afternoon tea;
 - a youth program;
 - a recording studio with musician in residence;
 - a Diabetes & Nutrition Program;
 - free Pilates classes & koori women's exercise classes;
 - a community BBQ and market; and
 - Employment and training programs run by Work Ventures
- Council has committed recurrent funding to staff this centre and run these activities. Currently all cleaning and care taking in and around the Redfern Community centre is contracted to local Aboriginal Groups.
- Council has continued to provide support to Kidspeak which is a program combining recreational activities and family support for primary school-aged, high need children from Waterloo. Kidspeak is run in partnership with a range of agencies including Barnados and the Premier's Department. Negotiations have commenced with the Department of Housing to refurbish a store-room on Waterloo Green, as a community facility to support Kids Speak and operate children's programs.

- The Indigenous Support project, operating from Council's Redfern Occasional Care Centre, has provided additional support and subsidised child care to Indigenous families. A Specialist indigenous support worker has commenced working with local families and children.
- Children in this community are not parented in conventional ways. Council and other organisations run many programs aimed at filling the gap left by absent parents or parents disabled by mental illness, drug and or alcohol abuse.
- Working with these children requires intensive resources, endless patience and unwavering commitment. CoS has developed a range of recreational and developmental programs aimed at meeting these children where they are at, and increasing their social connections and support. Through organising family outings, CoS is helping families to have positive experiences of being together while participating in shared activities. The aim of these activities is to gradually empower parents and carers, so that they are able to independently increase the range of positive experiences shared with their families.
- During the May school holidays, staff organised a series of activities for some particularly challenging children to spend some time away from 'The Block'. CoS staff booked children into a day camp, visited with families to get the permission slips, organised transport to and from home, paid for the day camps and packed the children's lunches. They also organised support staff to attend the camp and provide special supervision. The support staff attended behaviour management conferences with camp organisers, to minimise the risk of children being banned due to unacceptable behaviour. This is a very intense and expensive service.
- The family activities and community BBQs at Redfern Community Centre are all about building community connectedness. This is vitally important in a community where many of the traditional social structures such as "the family" have broken down or do not exist.
- Council is the lead agency in the development of the recently endorsed Community Safety Plan for Redfern and Waterloo. This plan aims to take a strategic, partnership-based approach to tackling the underlying causes of crime. In this way the plan aims to make the Redfern-Waterloo area a safer place to live, work and visit by encouraging social interaction and community connections where community bonds are strong and where people share a sense of ownership of, and commitment to their neighbourhoods. The plan acknowledges that the causes of crime are complex and that there are no simple solutions when it comes to creating safer communities. Council chairs and convenes the Redfern-Waterloo Community Safety Taskforce. This is a committee made up of a number of State Government departments, non-Government organisations and community representatives who meet quarterly to monitor implementation of the plan.
- Council has also developed a Public Domain Plan which involves upgrading Redfern Street through streetscape improvements, landscaping, reinforcing pedestrian links, developing cycleways and upgrading open spaces in the two suburbs.

- Council is represented on each of the three Taskforces convened by the Premier's Department, as part of the Redfern/Waterloo Partnership Project. These include a Child and Families Taskforce, a Drug and Alcohol Taskforce and a Youth Taskforce. Prior to the amalgamation South Sydney Council chaired the two public forums convened by the Partnership Project as well as the Community Council, which has been established as an advisory body to the Partnership Project.
- Council continues to provide a number of services and programs for people in the Redfern-Waterloo community with high and complex needs including Redfern Occasional Child Care, Drivin' for Employment, Lights Camera Action, Rec'n' Redfern and Meals on Wheels. This work is complemented by community development workers who specialise in supporting local the local Aboriginal and multi-cultural communities.
- Council has committed \$1.05 million to the up-grade of the three parks in Hugo and Eveleigh Streets. This includes a new multipurpose court (including tennis and basketball), improved fencing, retaining walls, shelter, night lighting and footpath reconstruction. Council funding will be assisted by a grant of \$20,000 from the NSW Department of Sport and Recreation to upgrade the basketball courts in Hugo Street.
- Council has entered into a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with 3 other parties including NSW Government, University of Sydney and the Aboriginal Housing Company. All relevant State Government agencies are effectively included under the umbrella of the NSW Government, the most pertinent being State Rail, Department of Housing, Sydney Harbour Foreshore Authority and Planning NSW. The MOU outlines a framework for the co-operative relations between the parties mentioned above, particularly in relation to the Redfern/Waterloo Partnership Project.

Attachment 2

Redfern-Waterloo Partnership Project

Council commends the investment of \$7 million dollars from the Premier's Department in establishing the Redfern/Waterloo Partnership Project. The Partnership Project is a whole of Government, whole of community approach to address the complex range of issues in Redfern and Waterloo. This partnership approach is critical in achieving long-term and sustainable change for the Redfern and Waterloo communities.

Council acknowledges the Human Services Review, commissioned under the Partnership Project, is an important process in assessing the capacity of local services to meet community needs. The Review will include government and non-government human services within or provided to the Redfern/Waterloo areas. The findings of the review have the potential to redirect existing resources and to inform the reshaping of the existing service network. It is important that the Review does not lead to a reduction in current funding for human services in Redfern and Waterloo.

Another key initiative of the Partnership Project is the Redfern, Eveleigh, Darlington & Waterloo (RED) Strategy. The Strategy aims to take a holistic approach to addressing urban renewal, economic revitalisation, transport, conservation and improvements in urban amenity for the RED precincts.

Council supports the objectives of the RED strategy in revitalising the precinct. If these objectives are appropriately and sensitively implemented, urban renewal can bring significant social and economic benefits for existing residents and businesses. The opportunity to capitalise on the RED precinct's proximity to the City, and access to major transport infrastructure, should not be lost.

The Human Services Review and the RED strategy are major initiatives of the Partnership Project. However, both projects have been seriously undermined by delays in agreed time lines and flawed community consultation processes. This has led to community frustration and suspicion, which may hamper the outcomes of both these projects.

One of the primary criticisms of the Partnership Project is that it is a "top down" approach from Government, rather than a true and equal partnership with the communities of Redfern and Waterloo. The Premier's Department has failed to adequately engage the local community with the Project, and for this reason community members continue to have misgivings about the Project and are feeling somewhat disenfranchised from the whole process.

Council supports a place-based approach to the issues facing Redfern and Waterloo. It is imperative that agencies and services tailor their service to meet the real needs of a community in a way that recognised the cultural, social, physical and economic realities of a specific location. In this regard Council acknowledges that commitment from all participating agencies is vital to successfully tackle the entrenched social issues facing Redfern and Waterloo. The partnership model can only be successful when all levels of government and the community are actively engaged and involved in the process.

Attachment 3

key Issues for Redfern/Waterloo

Substance Abuse

It is widely accepted that one of the most complex social issues affecting communities all over the world is the use and misuse of illicit drugs and alcohol. The suburbs of Redfern and Waterloo are no different to most other areas in terms of the challenges brought on by the impact of drug and alcohol use in the community. The problems caused by alcohol and drug misuse include unsafely discarded needles and syringes, intoxication, dealing and using in public places and violence. All these factors contribute to negative community perceptions about a place. The key is to develop practical solutions to tackle the drug problem and to ease the suffering of individuals and families caught in the cycle of drug use.

The Redfern/Waterloo Anti-Drug Strategy was announced by the Premier in November 2002. The Strategy is an integrated planning approach to the use of illegal drug use in Redfern/Waterloo and Darlington. The Strategy incorporates a number of practical responses to specific crime and safety issues in these suburbs. The Premier's Department has established a Drug and Alcohol Taskforce to oversee the implementation of this Strategy.

An innovative pilot project called MERIT (Magistrate's Early Referral Into Treatment) is being trialed in Redfern. The MERIT program provides drug assessment and treatment to people arrested for drug related crimes. Participation is voluntary and is a condition of court bail. Participation and treatment is taken into account by the court in sentencing.

Despite a concerted effort by government agencies and local services, drug and alcohol abuse continues to be a major issue for the communities of Redfern and Waterloo. Solutions to these issues are proving to be elusive, and all levels of the community must be involved in developing creative and practical responses to this growing problem.

Local Policing and Law Enforcement

Traditionally we have relied on the Police and the criminal justice system as the most important components of law and order policy. However, it has become very apparent that approaches that can help to eliminate the conditions that contribute to crime depend on more than just police authorities.

This is not to downplay the effectiveness of the police in reducing or preventing crime. Rather, it is to highlight that any successful community safety strategy will need to involve a broad range groups and individuals in developing strategies around the key issues of crime and safety.

Council would like to acknowledge the vital role Redfern Police have taken in improving community safety in Redfern and Waterloo. Local Area Commander Dennis Smith has worked tirelessly to improve relations between the community and Redfern Police. Rather than taking a reactive approach to policing, Redfern Police are now embarking on a range of pro-active community-based policing strategies designed to strengthen community relationships as a key crime prevention method. Furthermore Redfern Police have been an active participant in the Redfern/Waterloo Partnership Project and are committed to building strategic partnerships to address local issues.

Examples of this community-based approach include appointing a second Youth Liaison Officer at the command as well as participation in the Police-Youth Mentor Project. This project involves local Police (often in their own time and despite limited training and resources) working with local at-risk and vulnerable children and young people. The Police take these youth on excursions and organised activities designed to improve relations between the two groups, improve school attendance and to reduce the incidence of youth-related crime.

Council believes that committing more resources to Police in community liaison roles (including upgrading such positions to the sergeant level) especially Aboriginal Community Liaison Officers, and increasing dialogue with local Aboriginal leaders may be beneficial in developing a more culturally appropriate policing model for the area.

Housing

Waterloo supports one of the highest concentrations of public housing in Sydney. Today up to 90% of all dwellings in Waterloo are owned by the Department of Housing (DoH). There are more than two thousand units of public housing in the suburb, with a mix of high rise, three-storey walk up apartments and medium density housing.

Due to the Department of Housing's priority housing policy, a large proportion of tenants are older people, people from non-English speaking background, single parents or people with a mental illness or health concern. Despite the special needs of its clients, DoH does not seem to have been able to commit any additional resources for appropriate support services. Adequate maintenance is also an ongoing issue for DoH tenants.

The state of The Block in Redfern is a cause for major concern for this community. Much of the housing on The Block is in a dreadful state of disrepair and requires urgent and immediate attention. The Aboriginal Housing Company (AHC) has been involved in demolishing derelict properties and have prepared a masterplan known as the "Pemulwuy Redevelopment Project" for the redevelopment of this site. However, long standing social issues such as alcohol use and misuse, domestic violence and child neglect also need to be addressed if living conditions are to improve for this community.

Education, Employment and Training Opportunities

Alexandria Park Community School has employed a range of innovative methods to encourage children to attend school and provide support to families by co-locating other services to this campus. However, while this is to be commended, it has done little to minimise community concern over the closure of Redfern Public School. Chronic unemployment remains a major issue for the communities of Redfern and Waterloo. It is anticipated that the findings of the Human Services Review will inform government and the community on how best to tackle long term unemployment and improve access to appropriate training opportunities.

Children

Many of the children in Redfern/Waterloo are not like other children. They sometimes come from families where drug and alcohol abuse is part of everyday life and long-term unemployment is the norm. They experience disadvantage in many aspects of their life, and for this reason they grow up quickly, become "streetwise" and develop strategies (both good and bad) to cope with their surroundings. As we have already mentioned, these children are not parented in conventional ways, and their experience of family life is not always a positive one.

Intensive family support and genuine co-ordination between service providers is critical if these issues are to be addressed appropriately. The Departments of Community Services, Health, Education, Council and non-government organisations all have a critical role in improving the quality of life of children who live in Redfern/Waterloo. All these agencies must find ways to work together and help families to establish better connections and access to local health and education services. They must also work hard to win the trust of these families, who often have a fear of government based on policies of the past.

Disenfranchised Youth

Disenfranchised youth is a major challenge for the communities of Redfern/Waterloo. These young people come from a range of cultural backgrounds and different socio-economic groups. Young people are often depicted by the media as constituting an increasingly dangerous and criminal group. The fact is, that most crime is committed by adults. Most young people manage to find the right pathway for themselves but for those who are vulnerable, the key is to provide better support for those in danger of falling through gaps in the existing support service network. Even more challenging is the need to provide ways to help young people who, for whatever reason, are already adrift from their families, schools and other support systems, and for whom there is no obvious way forward.

Lack of co-ordination between youth services and a paucity of "after dark" activities for young people are two of the primary issues that need to be considered with the restructure of the human services network.