

INQUIRY INTO ISSUES RELATING TO REDFERN/WATERLOO

Organisation:

Name: Mr James Walsh

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Date Received: 09/03/2004

Theme:

Summary

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6 March 2004

The Director
Standing Committee on Social Issues
Legislative Council
Parliament House
Macquarie St
Sydney NSW 2000

**Submission into Issues Relating to Redfern/Waterloo to the NSW Legislative
Committee on Social Issues**

Dear Committee Members.

I have been a resident in Chalmers St since 1997 after moving to Sydney from Brisbane. I choose to live in this area because of its centrality and diversity.

I welcome the opportunity to respond to calls for submission on this area and refer below to three of your terms of reference.

1) Policing strategies and resourcing in the Redfern/Waterloo area.

Since living here we have on about four occasions found the Police to be very responsive to our personal needs efficiently handling noise and other complaints. I must actually congratulate the government of New South Wales on this because in Queensland the Police will not even come out for suburban noise complaints unless a number of people complain.

The police presence however seems to have declined in recent years. I go walking every morning for exercise and used regularly to see foot and car patrols but I do not see them so often anymore. That used to give one a good sense of comfort and security.

Related to this is the issue last year where a series of attacks occurred on single occupant vehicles waiting on a red light at the corner of Elizabeth and Redfern St. At least three people I know of in my building had bricks or stones thrown

through their windscreens and in the ensuing panic had their hand bag stolen or a threatening demand made for their mobile phone and wallet. Two taxi drivers related similar experiences to me. One friend in this building complained to Redfern Police about the lack of patrols and the respondent at the Police Station indicated that the Indigenous Elders did not like the Police regularly patrolling the streets as they felt it threatening. At a strata meeting in my building we noted this and the decreased patrols and enhanced security in our building.

I am concerned about this as this particular route is a gateway to the CBD from the airport. It is only a matter of time before someone is killed as a driver accelerates through a red light to escape attack or one of the assailants is dragged under a car escaping. In a submission on the planned upgrade of Redfern St I have suggested night vision cameras in known hot spots to deter crime.

I realise that the Police have a big challenge in this area but I also question the wisdom of taking local youth on holiday camps. I realise that these youths are often disadvantaged and deserve a break from their plight but there are numerous charitable organisations that can do this or perhaps a Police Youth Club. I can not help but feel that as some of those in the recent riot had been to these Camps that all familiarity did was breed contempt.

I think that moving the Police Station to the TNT tower and making it more prominent is a good thing. But the Police also need to maintain a strong presence on the streets of this area with regular car and foot patrols.

2) Other Existing Government Programs

Whilst I applaud the amalgamation of Councils. In fact the more amalgamations the better as tiny local municipalities are wasteful. I hope that the City of Sydney does not lose sight of the excellent community initiatives of the former South Sydney Council which held various events that bound the diverse community together. I have learnt more about indigenous people from visiting various events at Redfern Park than from many other sources.

Apart from the former South Sydney Council there is not a great indication of what services there are in this area. Certainly State Government and Federal Government Services are not necessarily catalogued.

Recreational facilities are seriously degraded. The two former Councils have fought endlessly about the swimming pool at Prince Alfred Park. Hopefully with the amalgamation this facility will be upgraded. On very hot summer days I see plenty of local children using this facility and it desperately needs upgrading. In fact that whole park does. The only improvement I have seen in seven years was a bit of repaving during the Olympics.

There is a lack of support services in this area full stop. Post Offices have closed or amalgamated. Free community bus services for the elderly have stopped. Banks have shut up and moved on. Without some of these services shops which relied on passing trade have also shut up the community has lost its soul and people have to

travel elsewhere for quite a few things. You only have to look at Redfern St to see how many shops are now routinely shuttered up.

3) Non-government Service and Service Provision

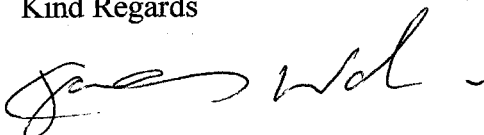
I have already alluded to part of this above. I am concerned about the upgrade of Redfern St which was coincidentally featured close to your advertisement in the Sydney Morning Herald. It makes no sense to try and (for want of a better word) tart up Redfern St line it with Cafes and Bookshops and the like then have social discontent just across the railway line. It is a recipe to further disenfranchise the indigenous community at Redfern/Waterloo and given the current climate likely to be a white elephant as no merchant will want to move in there anyway.

It might make sense to encourage indigenous artisans into shops in Redfern St. Make it for indigenous Art the equivalent of Queen St Woollahra. Maybe even find property for Aboriginal Arts companies to use and exhibit dance or drama. This would create a sense of pride in indigenous folk in the community even if they were not the artists, it might even create employment for some. It could then become a means to attract tourists to an area that they normally only travel through. Mix this with cafes and other shops and it could become a good melting pot like the main streets in Norton St Liechardt and King St Newtown. Perhaps this is a naïve vision but I think that it would be a singularly appropriate gesture for the indigenous community and far more inclusive an option than just more shops and cafes.

Perhaps even encourage a local festival of indigenous arts and culture something akin to London's Notting Hill Festival.

These are all that I wish to comment on. Thank you for the opportunity and I hope that my suggestions were helpful.

Kind Regards

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read 'James Walsh', with a stylized flourish at the end.

James Walsh