

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

**Organisation:** Fact Tree Youth Services

**Name:** Mr Stuart Rosewarne

**Telephone:**

**Date Received:** 17/05/2004

---

**Theme:**

**Summary**

**A submission prepared by the Fact Tree Youth Service, Waterloo to the  
'Inquiry into Issues Relating to Redfern/Waterloo'  
Standing Committee on Social Issues,  
Legislative Council,  
Parliament of New South Wales  
30 April 2004**

**The Standing Committee on Social Issues  
Legislative Council  
Parliament of New South Wales**

The Fact Tree Youth Service welcomes the opportunity to present this submission to the inquiry being conducted by the Legislative Council's Standing Committee on Social Issues into 'Issues Relating to Redfern/Waterloo'.

In making this submission and responding to the Inquiry's Terms of Reference, the submission makes the following observations:

1. the recent and singular preoccupation with policing strategies has to be regarded as in violation of the 'whole of community' approach to the delivery and provision of public services;
2. the commitment demonstrated by established government programs has lacked coherence and integrity because of a lack of vision, a lack of engagement with the local communities and, above all, a persistent turnover of staff charged with responsibility for programs;
3. non-government organisations continue to be critically important in the provision of services that meet community-identified needs and in contributing to the vitality of local communities, although it has to be recognised that the work of the NGOs is frustrated by inadequate funding;
4. there are fundamental flaws in the Redfern/Waterloo Partnership Program insofar as the RWPP has promised much and delivered little that is concrete and failed to engage in meaningful consultations with local communities;
5. above all, there is a fundamental flaw with premise that Redfern and Waterloo can be joined together as a single community for this denies the distinct differences between and the uniqueness of these two communities.

## **The Fact Tree Youth Service – a prominent part of the Waterloo Community**

The Fact Tree Youth Service has been providing a range of services in the suburb of Waterloo for well over ten years. In this time, the Service has become a well-established if not pivotal organisation in responding to and meeting the distinct needs of youth and families who **are** the local community.

The Fact Tree's primary focus is on the provision of a range of programs for the local youth, and especially for teenagers. First and foremost the Service acts as a Drop In Centre providing a much-needed gathering place for young people in an area that has a dearth of open space let alone readily-accessible recreational facilities. As a Drop In Centre, the Fact Tree also provides a range of ancilliary support services. These include access to a Computer Room and games facilities. The Fact Tree builds on these ancilliary support services to provide a variety of organised on-site activities, including pool and table tennis competitions, art and craft activities and cooking classes. These have been extended in off-site programs, some organised around school holiday programs that cover a large variety of activities, others organised on a more regular basis, such as participation in touch football, basketball and other sporting competitions.

The provision of a number of other critically important professional services also forms an important aspect of the work of the Fact Tree. These include Alcohol and Drug counselling, Family and Adolescent counselling including young mother support programs, Juvenile Justice support programs, Learn-to-drive programs, and programs that are organised to meet the specific and respective needs of young men and young women. The Fact Tree has also been performing a very constructive role in promoting employment opportunities through its participation in the Jobsearch program as well as in liaising with some of the inner-city's most important employers. (This has, for instance, included liaising with The University of Sydney as a follow up to the University's Indigenous Employment Strategy and with The University of Sydney Sports Union with a view to establishing direct links with a view to promoting employment opportunities for indigenous Australians within the University.)

The work of the Fact Tree also involves the staff in actively engaging with a host of community activities that has cemented the place of the Service as being integral to life and vibrancy of the local community. The Fact Tree staff participate in the work and activities of the Community Action Drug Team, the Youth Clinical Needs Forum and the Youth Matters Steering Committee, the Redfern-Waterloo Street Team Case management, the Family Support Action Group, the South Sydney City Council Youth Advisory Committee, the Indigenous Women and Children's Community Domestic Violence Advocacy Network and a number of other indigenous Australians forums.

This engagement with and the different ways in which the Fact Tree Youth Service participates in the Waterloo Community means that we are well placed to be contributing to the reflections of the Inquiry into Issues Relating to Redfern/Waterloo being undertaken by the Standing Committee on Social Issues.

The submission addresses each of the substantive terms of reference detailed by the Standing Committee.

The submission contends that the focus of the Standing Committee is, firstly, misplaced and, secondly, is flawed in the assumption that two distinct communities can simply be subsumed under the label Redfern/Waterloo.

In first instance, the Committee's preoccupation with policing essentially approaches the problems and challenges that present to the communities of Redfern and Waterloo the wrong way around. Policing an 'about face' that that cludes by arguing that

Secondly, the communities of Redfern and Waterloo are quite different in their socio-economic make up, and this makes for a host of different and unique challenges. The implicit focus of the Standing Committee appears to be driven by the tensions that erupted in Redfern, and Waterloo is simply being subsumed into this without any real understanding that there are a host of issues and concerns within the Waterloo community that will be overlooked or overshadowed by the preoccupation with Redfern.

It is essential that the problems that confront Waterloo, and which require urgent public support in dealing with, not be eclipsed by this preoccupation with Redfern. There is an overwhelming urgency for the government to provide meaningful support for perhaps the most socio-economically disadvantaged community in New South Wales. There is an urgent need for the government to turn its attention to supporting age-specific and gender-specific support programs. This necessitates the augmenting of funds that can be directed towards meeting the specific needs and unique challenges that define Waterloo as a community and which would make for a more sustainable and richer community.

Stuart Rosewarne

On behalf of the Board of Management, Fact Tree Youth Services

- 1. The recent and singular preoccupation with policing strategies has to be regarded as in violation of the 'whole of community' approach to the delivery and provision of public services**
- 1.1 The incidents of civil unrest, in 2001 and more recently, and the evidence of a high concentration of various transgressions of the law across the suburbs of Redfern and Waterloo has meant that the government has tended to prioritise policing as the essential element in its urban management strategy. The consequence has been that a whole host of social problems have been framed by the preoccupation law enforcement. Other ways of engaging with the local communities have been marginalised in the process. In the experience of the Fact Tree Youth Service, this approach has proved to be largely counterproductive. Rather than engender the resolution of problems, and however much the strategy has been represented as one being built on the foundations of partnership, defining the engagement with local communities around a policing agenda contributes to many of the problems that policing seeks to redress.
- 1.2 The 'policing strategy' has not instilled in the local communities a greater sense of trust or confidence in the capacity of police to deal with the range of challenges facing the communities. Longstanding animosities towards police cannot be readily addressed by a strategy that is preoccupied or defined in terms of increased policing.
- 1.3 Within and across communities, there is an entrenched anxiety that colors attitudes towards police, and nowhere is this more evident in the attitudes among children and youth in the area. This is the case irrespective of whether there has been any direct experience of dealing with the police. Heavy policing across the Redfern/Waterloo area merely reinforces the suspicion towards police and law enforcement more generally.
- 1.4 The effects of this are evident in the difficulties that police have in constructively engaging with children and youth throughout the area. The most striking illustration of this inability to engage with young people in the areas is that there is almost no interest among eleven-year olds and older children and teenagers in participating in PCYC programs. The consequence has been that the PCYC resources are under-utilised and do not generate the productive outcomes that other community-based services deliver.

- 2. The commitment demonstrated by established government programs has lacked coherence and integrity because of a lack of vision, a lack of engagement with the local communities and, above all, a persistent turnover of staff charged with responsibility for the programs**
- 2.1 There have been and are a range of government programs offered in the Redfern and Waterloo areas. There have also been numerous inquiries, reviews of programs and reports that have identified the necessity to address a range of diverse needs. However, there has been, and continues to be, a not uncommon pattern that expressed levels of commitment failing to be delivered.
- 2.2 Many of the government programs have been frustrated by high levels of staff turnover. The capacity of individuals in key or critically important positions to deliver services in an effective manner is very much contingent on building of relationships of trust and the establishment of rapport with the local service users. Yet, all too frequently, the transfer, promotion or retirement of staff results in a loss of continuity in service provision.
- 2.3 There is already considerable reluctance among many in the local community to avail themselves of government-provided services. Cultural differences, educational disadvantage and past negative experiences with government agencies underpin a general reticence to draw on the support that government departments have on offer. A familiar face can make all the difference to locals wending their way through the alien and unfamiliar maze of the bureaucratic requirements. This personal touch is crucial if critical social, legal and others needs are to be met, and high staff turnover frustrates access to let alone the delivery of the services. The changes in personnel tend to compound the sense of alienation, and this acts to erode any confidence in the commitment of the service providers to deliver. What in effect amounts to an itinerant bureaucratic order, the ever-changing face on the other side of the desk, actively discourages the communities from accessing available services.
- 2.4 This makes for considerable inefficiencies in the organisation and provision of services. Service provision is contingent upon the capacity of the ever-changing personnel to acquaint themselves with local residents. It takes time for government service providers to develop the sensitivity required in winning the confidence of the communities. This has acted to frustrate any real and meaningful engagement with local communities. As well, this is the basis of yet a further impediment to the effective delivery of services.
- 2.5 The turnover of staff also tends to hinder an engagement with local residents which would provide a telling sense of the type of services that are called for. Staff turnover also works to thwart the principles of the “whole-of-community” approach that is supposed to be the basis of the government’s program. This only serves to undermine any capacity to conduct any meaningful auditing of programs.

- 2.6 The net consequence, we would suggest, is that the systemic problems with government programs result in significant failings in the provision of services for the local communities. Programs that are not based on engaging with the sensitivities of local residents cannot really be expected to respond to the particular challenges of the local communities that distinguish the area as one of special needs. Government programs cannot be said to be an effective, let alone a cost inefficient means of service delivery. In fact, it is evident that some of the programs funded merely reinforce if not exaggerate many of the problems that are evident in Redfern and Waterloo.
- 2.7 There is one further issue that arises out of these reflections on the government engagement with local communities. Different government departments have periodically consulted with local residents. Most of these consultative processes have been premised on assurances that the government is seriously concerned with redressing the problems experienced by these communities. Consultations have proceeded on the basis that there is a need to identify concerns, assess and review existing programs with a view to determining how these might be improved, and new strategies formulated to address pressing concerns and needs. However, the frequency with which residents have placed their confidence in approaches by departmental officials, government agencies and a host of consultants belies the absolute lack of any meaningful change.
- 2.8 This practice, no doubt, is partly symptomatic of the failure of established government programs and other initiatives to gain a direct sense of the different service needs of residents and whether programs are meeting or failing in meeting these needs because of the high turnover of staff. But the frequency of consultations is also reflective of the constant, shifting terrain of successive government and/or ministerial mission statements. While ever these regular investigations into the affairs of different constituencies within these communities result in little that is concrete, they do absolutely nothing to engender any confidence in the capacity of government to meet local needs. In some respects these failings have merely promoted deep-seated disquiet within local communities towards what are viewed as one other form of government's invasive approach to community.
- 2.9 In the long experience of the Fact Tree Youth Service, it is evident that those drawing upon the service have participated in such consultative processes in the belief that something meaningful will come of them. The youth and their families have given of their time on the basis of promises by representatives of government that signal real commitment to formulate meaningful strategies to meeting the expressed needs of these communities. One could say that the different members of the local communities have been over-consulted to no real effect.
- 2.10 In the most recent spate of consultative processes, the younger members have expressed their disquiet with having seen their older siblings engage in such processes with no real outcomes. There has developed a feeling within the local

communities that the words and promises of the bureaucrats cannot really be trusted.

- 2.11 There is a litany of identified structural needs that have been revealed, and re-revealed, by the various reports and reviews of the area. These include: addressing drug and alcohol use; unemployment; poverty and housing, including public housing support; violence and crime, and the associated high levels of incarceration; safety; literacy and numeracy; parenting skills; and, aging.
- 2.12 This has prompted recommendations for the enhancement and/or adoption of a range of services, including: the introduction of 24-hour crisis support, especially for youth; crisis accommodation, including specific refuges for Aboriginal women and youth; employment support for Aboriginal workers and workers from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds; drug and alcohol support services; mental health services; intensive support for high risk families and youth; community transport; improved accommodation support services, including the provision of nursing home beds and respite care; some One Stop 'shop' services; childcare and parenting support.
- 2.13 These reviews have also highlighted the advantages in promoting greater collaboration and coordination in the provision of services by the various service providers. The reviews have also identified the need for: more adequate funding; the provision of appropriate and adequate premises and staffing; energies being invested in promoting awareness of services available; the provision of holistic and comprehensive service delivery; culturally appropriate services; greater diversity of service models, and especially outreach programs; sustainable services that provide for community development; and, appropriate and affordable housing.
- 2.14 There are thus a considerable number of challenges identified and recommendations on the provision of services that could be supported to address these. However, this 'engagement' with local communities has resulted in few concrete measures being implemented. Some of the programs that have been implemented fall far short of the ambitions held out for them. Where specific recommendations have been acted upon, such as the Premier's Department allocation of \$140,000 for Youth Enhancement funds to provide for weekend activities, they have failed simply because of a lack of commitment. In this particular instance, the project was suspended before its scheduled completion, and to date that project has not been subject to any review or auditing process.
- 2.15 There is a real need for some very serious reflection on the actual level of the government's commitment to the provision of the range of meaningful and effective services. Likewise there is an urgent need for the actual commitments to be audited. The present focus on policing merely serves to distract attention from what should after all be an essential element in the provision of services.



- 3. Non-government organisations continue to be critically important in the provision of services that meet community-identified needs and in contributing to the vitality of local communities, although it has to be recognised that the work of the NGOs is frustrated by inadequate funding**
- 3.1 The non-government agencies and organisations have been critically important in fostering community development. The success of the Fact Tree Youth Service is illustrative of this. The Fact Tree, in providing services for youth, has become an established institutional component the Waterloo community. Over its ten years' plus of operations, the Fact Tree has provided, and continues to provide an important measure of continuity and a sense of coherence to the local community.
- 3.2 The Fact Tree Youth Service, like a number of other *NGO* service providers in the area, provides a range of services. This is "one-stop shopping" that has contributed in quite profound ways to strengthening the vitality of the local community. The drop-in centre, the employment support, assistance with accommodation and legal support, all contribute in different ways to meeting the challenges of a community that is, in comparison with other communities, resource poor.
- 3.3 The continuity in the provision of these services has meant that the Fact Tree has developed as an important institutional vehicle in forging the integrity of the local community. Many of the youth who have participated in the Service's programs or availed the Fact Tree of its support have siblings who follow in their footsteps. Support for youth, including young mothers, has resulted in the Fact Tree becoming a critical reference point for many families in the area.
- 3.4 This association, underscored by young resident's confidence in the work of the Fact Tree, has meant that the support the Service provides is, strictly speaking, not simply restricted to youth. Many who have availed themselves of the services provided by the Fact Tree continue into their adult years to draw upon the support of Fact Tree staff.
- 3.5 This connection has placed the Fact Tree into a unique position in developing a deep-seated sense of the challenges facing not only the young people growing up in Waterloo, but also of the children and adults of the local government area. This has also helped to forge a spirit of confidence in the capacity of the Service to engage with local residents, and to draw on this to open up opportunities for the community to express their needs and ambitions.
- 3.6 The Service is thus very well placed to develop programs that meet the specific and changing needs of the local community. It is also well placed to discern evident tensions within the community, to identify possible and actual problems within families that the Department of Community Services fails to notice, and to work with individual youth who are having difficulties dealing with the myriad of problems that confront them.

- 3.7 The specialist services provided by the Fact Tree, as is the case with other *NGO* service providers, enables the development of a special rapport with youth in the area, and this provides insights into not only the challenges facing youth but others within the community. Thus, while the Service is focused on youth and young adults, its place in the community extends well beyond these constituencies. The durability of the Fact Tree and the longstanding association of staff with the Service has meant that close bonds have been formed with residents of all ages. Problems and difficulties affecting residents other than youth frequently present themselves to the Fact Tree. And, if the staff are not directly able to facilitate the sorting through of these issues, then there is the capacity to contact other service providers to coordinate the necessary support.
- 3.8 Notwithstanding assurances of present reviews to provide for some oversight and coordination of service provisions in the Redfern/Waterloo area, by any measure, there is little evidence that this is occurring. On the contrary, the effective coordination of services is being undertaken through mostly informal channels, through discussions among the different *NGO* providers.
- 3.9 This should not be considered to be an argument in support for reorganising *NGO* services on a more generic basis. The strength of the *NGO* sector lies in the bond that the individual providers establish with particular constituencies, and how this bond translates into different support afforded by the *NGOs* to meet the needs of local residents at different stages of their life cycle. The different range of services, as well as the different operational styles of the various *NGOs*, provides for diversity and flexibility in meeting the challenges of the Redfern and Waterloo communities.
- 3.10 This is not to say that the *NGOs* have been entirely successful. They are frustrated by a paucity of funds with which to finance the service delivery. There is so much that needs to be done, and so much that could be done, yet so little public funding with which to address intractable problems. The present accommodation facilities for most *NGOs* in the area leave a lot to be desired. There is an unambiguous and urgent necessity for the government to increase funding to support such services. The emphasis on policing strategies only serves to detract from this urgency. As well, this emphasis on policing directs resources to dealing with problems engendered that would be much more constructively addressed through better funded community support programs.

- 4. There are fundamental flaws in the Redfern/Waterloo Partnership Program insofar as the RWPP has promised much and delivered little that is concrete and failed to engage in meaningful consultations with local communities**
- 4.1 The Redfern/Waterloo Partnership Project represents a quite significant commitment to addressing some of the challenges facing the area. However, the direct experience of the Fact Tree with the Partnership Program has been less than positive. If this experience is any indication then the Fact Tree holds little hope in the possibility of the Partnership Project delivering anything of real substance for Redfern and Waterloo.
- 4.2 The Redfern/Waterloo Partnership Project, as the title signals, was supposed to be based upon an engagement and involvement with local communities. Yet, in the experience of the Fact Tree, the consultative process which was presented as the key point of entry for establishing a partnership has been experienced as being both disingenuous and quite circumspect.
- 4.3 On the one hand, consultations with local residents followed in the shadows of earlier assessments by consultants. Assurances that young people's commitment to discussing their issues with the Partnership Project would result in concrete outcomes have proved vacuous. Young people and youth who did engage with the process have expressed their complete frustration with these outside consultants taking them into their confidence, seemingly promising the world and to date delivering absolutely nothing tangible. This breach of confidence only serves to translate into anything to do with government.
- 4.4 On the other hand, the Board of Management of the Fact Tree Youth Service has been extremely frustrated by what seems a somewhat disingenuous commitment to the notion of 'partnership'. The Board has sought on several occasions to establish a meaningful working relationship with the Project, but unable to progress this. In early 2002 the Fact Tree Youth Service was advised by the Project that the Service was to be relocated. The Board met with representatives from the Premier's Department on a couple of occasions with a view to coordinating this relocation. Reflecting the expressed wishes and concerns of the young people using the Service, the Board endeavoured after these discussions to secure a 'Memorandum of Understanding' with the Premier's Department representatives. The rationale for this was that it was appropriate to clarify and define the terms of the relocation, which was scheduled for June 2003, in order to reassure the young people that the proposed relocation would not see the end of the Fact Tree. The Board's efforts to progress the MoU failed completely. To date, almost two years later, there has been no communication with the Fact Tree advising the Board that the 2002 plans have been suspended or scrapped.
- 4.5 The impression that the Fact Tree has, and this comes from discussing concerns with other NGOs in Waterloo and Redfern, is that beyond some initial efforts there has been comparatively little consultation with residents and community organisations.

There have been no follow ups, next to no report-backs to any organisation within the communities (a fact that might be substantiated by reference to the Redfern/Waterloo Partnership Project's website), and more generally a sense of retreat and withdrawal. In short, it is the considered opinion of the Fact Tree that the fundamental premise of the Partnership Program, viz., has in effect been compromised

- 4.6 The experience of the local community, and that of the Board of Management of the Fact Tree Service, does not instill any confidence in the integrity of the Redfern/Waterloo Partnership Project. All attempts on the part of the Fact Tree's staff to clarify what is happening have met with silence. The experience suggests that there is little substance in the 'whole-of-government' and the 'whole-of-community' philosophy that was supposed to underpin the Partnership Project.
- 4.7 The one real concrete initiative to emerge from the Redfern/Waterloo Partnership Project, the Redfern/Waterloo Street Team, is not positive testimony to its effectiveness. The Street Team has been operating for some time now. It is the opinion of Fact Tree both the conception and the management of this project have been less than satisfactory. As innovative as the project has been, the Street Team has established very few really meaningful connections with local communities. In some respects, this could be attributed to the possibility that staff were ill-equipped to demonstrate the maturity and initiative to drive the project. In other respects, the fault lies in the failure to engage with local residents. The observations of staff at the Fact Tree bear witness to this in the period immediately preceding as well as following the 'Redfern riots'. The Street Team had failed to sense the measure of disquiet among many Redfern residents prior to that Sunday. When the Street Team did begin to exercise some initiative, by inviting some indigenous elders into to speak to residents and others, it went outside the community. Many of the young residents simply did not know who these 'outsiders' were and felt no affinity with them and, as a consequence, were no need to respond to their appeals for order.
- 4.8 There is a still more fundamental shortcoming with the orientation of the Redfern/Waterloo Partnership Project insofar as this relates to Waterloo. The **RED** (Redfern/Eveleigh/Darlington) program has emerged as the paramount ambitions of the Partnership Project. This program is clearly of little direct consequence for Waterloo residents. Indirectly, however, it is of major significance. The reorientation of the resources and energies of the Partnership Project on the **RED** program has effectively led to the abandonment of any serious consideration or engagement with Waterloo.
- 4.9 A generous interpretation of the **RED** program might envisage incidental benefits flowing into the Waterloo community. This presumes that the challenges facing Waterloo residents and the integrity of this community are comparable to those in Redfern, Eveleigh and Darlington. This is in a most presumptuous assumption. It completely ignores what is unique in the making of Waterloo. It consequentially ignores the distinctive array of challenges that confront the Waterloo community.

In so doing, this simply highlights the failure of the Redfern/Waterloo Partnership Program to even begin to come to terms with the distinguishing characteristics of the communities with which this Program is supposed to be engaging with.

- 4.10 The more negative interpretation is that the focus on directing resources to the **RED** project will be to the longer term cost of government support for the Waterloo community. The revitalisation of the Redfern, Eveleigh Street and Darlington areas is clearly be promoted to the detriment of any engagement with the Waterloo community. This is not only a disservice to this community. Worse, it will serve to turn attention from the very real challenges faced by this community and turn consideration away from how these challenges can be constructively dealt with.

- 5. There is a fundamental flaw in premise that regards Redfern (and, for that matter, Eveleigh Street and Darlington) and Waterloo as being on the same socio-economic plain.**
- 5.1 The basic premise of the Redfern/Waterloo Partnership Project is that there are problems and challenges that these respective communities share in common. There are indeed many common problems and challenges, but the refusal to engage in meaningful ways with these communities, to learn from the respective communities, which is after all what the Partnership Project was supposed to be about, has meant that fundamental differences have been overlooked. In the process, the origins and the distinctive nature of the problems and challenges that confront these communities have been ignored.
- 5.2 A simple reflection on the socio-economic characteristics of the two suburbs should make this abundantly transparent. One of the principal preoccupations of government with Redfern, Waterloo, Eveleigh Street and Darlington is that there is a comparatively large number of indigenous Australians residing in these areas, and a still larger number of relatives and friends who reside temporarily or frequently visit. Census data that enumerates indigenous residence is notoriously problematic, because it fails to capture any real sense of the size and with this the character of indigenous households and communities more generally. Some sense of this can be gleaned from the 2001 Census count of indigenous inhabitants in Redfern and Waterloo. Both suburbs have comparatively large concentrations of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders. The resident population of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander population in Redfern is estimated at variously 3 per cent and more, recognising that there are many others who, through family connections and other networks, periodically reside in this suburb. The same observation can be made about Waterloo, except that the Census data indicates that the indigenous population is more than twice that of Redfern.
- 5.3 There is the presumption among policy makers that the high concentration of indigenous Australian residing in these two suburbs establishes a common point of reference. However, it is absolutely critical that not too much be drawn from this apparent statistical similarity. Through its long engagement with the local community of Waterloo, the Fact Tree has learnt that among indigenous inhabitants there is comparatively little interaction across Waterloo and Redfern. The indigenous inhabitants of these respective suburbs define themselves very much in terms of their being of the 'Waterloo mob' and the 'Redfern mob'. They have formed too all intents and purposes distinct and separate senses of community identity. This has been completely overlooked in the conflation of the suburbs with the institution of the Redfern/Waterloo Partnership Project and its implicit concern with addressing the challenges of the indigenous inhabitants.
- 5.4 A more general reflection of the socio-economic characteristics of the two suburbs reveals still more fundamental differences and exposes the folly in the focus of the Partnership Project. Reference to Table 1 reveals quite marked differences in

familial forms, Waterloo having a disproportionately larger number of families with children under 15 as well as quite significantly larger number of single parent families. Children make up a much larger proportion of the Waterloo community, and likewise twice as significant an aspect of family forms. Waterloo is much more defined by this family form.

- 5.5 The differences in residential accommodation between Waterloo and Redfern are also quite marked. Public housing forms the overwhelming proportion of the housing stock in Waterloo, and this translates into the fact that there are a significantly greater proportion of Waterloo residents residing in public housing.

TABLE 1: DEMOGRAPHIC PROFILE OF REDFERN AND WATERLOO  
Summary of key statistics for the area based on the ABS 2001 Census –  
proportion of population

	REDFERN	WATERLOO
Population	11,202	5,787
Aboriginal/Torres Strait Islanders	311	411
People of Culturally and Linguistically Diverse Backgrounds	31%	41%
Families with children under 15	22%	35%
Single parent families with children under 15	8.5%	22.8%
Highest Educational levels — Up to Year 10	25%	38%
Public housing (% of rental accommodation in the suburbs)	41 %	89%
Residents in public housing	39%	66%
Weekly income less than \$300	39%	66%
Unemployed	7.6%	16.6%
Children	5.0%	10.7%
Families with children – 928 families	22%	41%
Single parent families (%of the total number of families)	8.5%	22.8%

- 5.6 The significance of this predominance of public housing in Waterloo cannot be overlooked. Public housing dominates the housing stock, and this will remain an enduring feature of Waterloo. This quite clearly contrasts with Redfern and, more notably, Darlington which are being subject to a process of gentrification that is resulting in the displacement of residents who are located at the lower end of the socio-economic spectrum. Waterloo is unlikely to experience the transformation in the socio-economic composition of the resident population that is being experienced in Redfern and more so Darlington.
- 5.7 The predominance of public housing is also reflective of another significantly distinguishing social characteristic of Waterloo. The suburb has one of the highest concentrations of single parent families in New South Wales. And while Redfern also has high concentration of single parent families, this is not so striking as is the case in Waterloo.
- 5.8 The predominance of single parent families is also indicative of a quite different demographic profile to Redfern. There is a much higher proportion of families residing in Waterloo with children under 15 years of age. Waterloo household formation is more in terms of families with children. This translates into a suburb in which children and youth comprises a more significant component of the population than Waterloo's neighbours. Should the review of the provision of community services not acknowledge these differences, this will do a disservice to any critical assessment of the specific needs that must be met in Waterloo and, more particularly, the needs of children and youth.
- 5.9 The other distinguishing feature of the Waterloo community is the measure of socio-economic disadvantage that is signalled by income levels. In terms of average income levels, Waterloo is a distinctively more impoverished community than Redfern. The Waterloo community is one that is much more dependent upon the support of government through social security payments. To conflate Redfern and Waterloo is to set aside the relatively greater degree of material disadvantage across the Waterloo community. The 2001 Census data reveals that Waterloo is one of, if not the poorest community in New South Wales. If this is considered in the context of the predominance of single parent families and the comparatively high density of families with children under 15 years of age, then socio-economic disadvantage must be regarded as being multi-layered. Waterloo faces a host of real challenges that demand the support of government, and which would otherwise be hidden by the conflation of Redfern and Waterloo. Likewise, it would be quite inappropriate to promote a government engagement with the community that has an emphasis on policing. Indeed such an approach would more likely be counterproductive, instilling in children and the youth of the area the belief that all government could offer was the heavy hand of the law.
- 5.10 The focus of the government on addressing challenges that are defined in terms of indigenous inhabitants in the Redfern/Waterloo area also overlooks another very distinguishing feature of Waterloo. This is the extraordinary cultural



diversity of the local community. Table 2 provides an unambiguous indication of this distinction. The composition of the respective populations is fairly different. This fact was elucidated by the South Sydney Council's study *Pathways to Prevention*.

**Table 2: People from Culturally and Linguistically Diverse Backgrounds**

Language spoken at home	Redfern		Waterloo	
Russian*	362	3.2%	667	11.7%
Greek	345	3%	93	1.6%
Cantonese(Chinese)*	305	2.7%	169	2.9%
Arabic (including Lebanese) *	294	2.6%	135	2.3%
Mandarin (Chinese)	193	1.7%	37	0.6%
Spanish	164	1.4%	122	2.1%
Vietnamese	110	<1%%	217	3.8%

- 5.11 According to this study, one in five or 19% of people living in South Sydney from a Culturally and Linguistically Diverse background have a poor level of English proficiency. 21% of residents speak a language other than English. The most common language other than English spoken at home in Waterloo is Russian, Cantonese and Arabic.<sup>1</sup>
- 5.12 There is a fundamental flaw in the premise that the communities of Redfern and Waterloo can be conflated as one as if there are no real and substantive differences between these two communities. The community of Waterloo is quite different from that of Redfern. There are quite distinctive needs that cannot even begin to be identified, let alone challenges addressed, with the conflation that informs the constitution of the Redfern/Waterloo Partnership Project.
- 5.13 The Fact Tree Youth Service confronts this reality every day. The presumption that there is a 'one-size fits all' approach to the problems and challenges of these suburbs is quite erroneous. It does a real disservice to these communities, and

---

1. South Sydney Council (2001) *In Pathways to Prevention* Project- Interim issues paper

should this ever become the basis of the delivery of community support programs will be a veritable recipe for disaster.

- 5.14 The hope that the 'problems' that blew up in the 'Redfern riots' will be readily dealt with through the proposals informing the **RED** project, or that the gradual gentrification of the area will see the steady displacement of many of the sources of the problems, will not touch Waterloo. There are a host of specific needs that are going to have to be met into the continuing future. There is a fundamental and urgent necessity to acknowledge this.
- 5.15 Nor will the focus on the policing strategy as a key element in, or underpin of the Redfern/Waterloo Partnership Project provide an answer. The more significant place of families, including the dominance of single-parent families, in Waterloo suggests a strategy that engages constructively through the provision of a range of support services is the more sensible direction in which to be moving. There are educational and vocational support challenges that must be met, and these are necessarily different from those in Redfern.
- 5.16 In recognising the distinctive and unique socio-economic complexion of the Waterloo community, there is also the need to recognise that effective community support requires the provision of a raft of services that can not possibly be provided from outside the area, such as through the auspices of the **RED** project, nor in the form of a one-stop service centre. The needs of young people are quite different from those of youth, just as the needs of youth are quite different from those of adults. To collapse service provision into a one-size fits all with the object of economising on services will make for problems rather than provide a means for redressing problems. There are some very real dangers in presuming that young people can be brought into contact with youth without complication.
- 5.17 There are gender specific needs that have to be addressed. This is evident in the high proportion of single parent families. The Fact Tree is quite cognizant of this through the support provided through the 'Young Mothers Support Group'. There is this then an overwhelming urgency for the government to turn its attention to supporting age-specific and gender-specific support programs, and for providing adequate funding that enables the provision of meaningful support to address the specific needs and unique challenges that define Waterloo as a community.