

INQUIRY INTO ISSUES RELATING TO REDFERN/WATERLOO

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Theme:

Summary

Committee Social Issues - Submission to Parliamentary Inquiry into Redfern Waterloo

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Please find attached the Redfern Neighbourhood Advisory Board's submission to the Legislative Council's Standing Committee on Social Issues - Redfern Waterloo Inquiry.

Regards

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Redfern Neighbourhood Advisory Board Submission to NSW Legislative Council's Standing Committee on Social Issues

Parliamentary Inquiry into Redfern/Waterloo

The Redfern Neighbourhood Advisory Board (NAB) is made up of local tenant representatives, government and non government agencies including, Department of Housing, City of Sydney Council, Department of Community Services and aged and youth services. The aim of the NAB is to improve life on the public housing estates by bringing together agencies and tenants to work collaboratively to address community concerns. This submission, excluding the section on the Redfern Waterloo Partnership Project, was originally submitted to the RED strategy. It outlines some of the major issues faced by public housing tenants on the Waterloo and Redfern Estates and makes key recommendations regarding the proposed changes planned to the area by the Redfern Waterloo Partnership Project.

The Redfern Neighbourhood Advisory Board welcomes changes to the area including strategies, which seek to benefit low income earners, a large aged population, people with high support needs and families. The Redfern Waterloo Partnership Project (RWPP) has taken steps to implement programs that seek to address issues within the community, including the development of the Community Safety Plan, establishment of the Street Team and family support services. However, a number of strategies originally promised in consultation with the community have not been delivered, such as making funding available to existing services and programs, establishing small grants for community development and establishing an Employment Taskforce. Decisions made by the RWPP without adequate community consultation has raised concerns regarding their honesty, openness, transparency and commitment to the existing community.

General Issues

- Lack of coordinating strategy to link new services into the broader framework of initiatives and existing infrastructure
- No expansion of existing services
- Unclear or unrealistic timeframes, such as the short timeframe to carry out the Review of Human Services and to conduct the Community Engagement Strategy
- No clear strategy to evaluate outcomes achieved by RWPP funded services
- Unclear criteria for allocating funding to services

- Lack of strategies to maintain existing social housing and to develop a clear and transparent plan for a variety of housing options within the area
- Lack of strategies to deal with increasing gentrification in the area and the implication for future service provision
- Lack of results

The RWPP

- Lack of co-ordinating strategies between Departments to achieve outcomes
- Lack of strategy to ensure accountability of partners
- Lack of co-ordinating strategies to link initiatives to existing infrastructure or services
- No consideration of pre-existing resource constraints
- Uncertainty about how outcomes will be achieved, especially as no extra funding is attached to lead agencies, such as the Department of Housing

Consultation

- Lack of feedback from consultation. For example, the Community Engagement Strategy has not been made available
- Lack of genuine engagement with the community in proposals or decision making
- Failure to provide context about the proposed change to social mix and increased population at RED strategy consultations
- Poor coordination and notification of community forums
- Failure to adequately engage existing forums and infrastructure
- Lack of adequate information about proposed initiatives or changes to promised initiatives
- No media strategy or engagement with existing local newsletters/ newspapers
- General failure to engage with the community resulting in a poor and inaccurate understanding of community services and networks
- Inadequate support of existing community forums and or infrastructure. For example, a lack of support for the Community Drug and Alcohol Taskforce

Recommendations

- Provide adequate funding to existing organizations to build capacity
- Fund key initiatives promised to build social capital, such as community development grants, employment and education initiatives
- Make the Community Engagement Consultation available to the community
- Develop culturally and linguistically appropriate initiatives
- Establish evaluation of RWPP funded programs
- Establish a social housing plan to maintain and expand social housing
- See other key recommendations under each heading

Consultation

Recommendations

- The community must be actively involved in all stages of the planning process
- The RED strategy must hold regular public meetings
- Existing community forums, such as the NABs, must be actively involved in consultation processes
- Consultation processes must be clear, open and transparent
- Control, responsibility and accountability of implementing strategies must be made clear to the community

Problems identified

Community consultation and active community involvement in decision making processes is a crucial step in identifying issues of concern to the community and as a means to ensure that change implemented meets community need. Despite a number of consultations conducted in Redfern and Waterloo in recent years, little action has resulted, and more often than not, community members are not provided with feedback regarding the purpose and outcomes of the consultations. This has led to many community members feeling that their views are undervalued, or when no action is forthcoming, that their community is not worthy of the resources necessary to address the issues they have identified.

Consultation must be placed in a context and members must be told how their comments will be used. Clear and transparent information must be provided so that people understand all the issues at stake and how it might impact on their lives and community. Consultation must be ongoing and the community must be encouraged to be actively involved in decision making processes

A variety of consultation processes must be in place, as many public housing tenants cannot attend meetings due to ill health, age or disability.

Actions proposed

- Regular information and feedback must be provided to the community
- Make the Community Engagement Consultation available to the community
- Include a variety of consultation processes to target all community members
- Use existing infrastructure, such as the NABs and local agencies, to keep residents informed of issues and as a means to receive feedback from the community

Housing

Recommendations

- Retain all public housing land
- Include a minimum of 6% public housing and 6% affordable housing in all new private housing developments
- Include a variety of housing options to support residents to remain living in the area such as, respite care, supported accommodation and halfway housing
- Establish a nursing home on the Rachel Forster site

Problems identified

The Waterloo and Redfern communities are significantly disadvantaged. The level of disadvantage has increased due to Department of Housing's (DoH) 'priority' housing policy, which has increased the number of people housed with complex needs requiring a range of support services. The increase in social disadvantage on the estates is further reinforced by the continuing decrease in funding for many social services. In particular, funding for public housing has been significantly reduced, resulting in the inability of the DoH to build new housing or maintain properties, especially aging stock, to appropriate levels. The already proposed redevelopment of the block bounded by Elizabeth, Morehead, Phillip and Kettle Sts is an example of the shift towards partnerships with the private sector and the redevelopment will reduce the number of tenancies in the area. At the same time, the demand for public housing has risen dramatically, as demonstrated by the long waiting list.

The RED strategy estimates the population living in the area will increase by 50%. This is likely to occur through increased concentrations of private development surrounding the estates, resulting in a reduction of low income earners as part of the social mix.

Whilst community members welcome proposed changes to the area, especially strategies to address crime, mental health, drug and alcohol issues, the proposal to significantly change the 'social mix' is not viewed as necessary to the development of the community. In fact, a strong sense of belonging and community is felt by existing community members and this has been identified in many consultations, including as part of the Safety Taskforce consultation conducted earlier this year.

Building social capital and strengthening the existing communities is recognized as imperative to reduce levels of disadvantage and to improve perceptions of safety. Community members recognize that a variety of housing options that support residents to continue living in the area assists in building community capacity, as does the provision of tenure security.

Concern has been raised about the level of investment properties as part of the private development. Private investment properties shift wealth away from the existing community and as the population living in such properties is usually transitory the input into social capital is also potentially reduced.

Given the above concerns, it is imperative that the government takes the opportunity to ensure a significant percentage of both public and affordable housing is included as part of the new developments. A percentage of public housing within the new developments would help build community capacity, assist the DoH to carry out maintenance work on existing properties and assist in retaining the level of tenancies on the estate.

For a comprehensive analysis of housing need in the area, refer to the South Sydney City Council Housing Needs Study conducted in 2002 and, *"Who Cares? We Care!" Report of the South Sydney Public Housing Taskforce*.

Actions proposed

- Include a minimum of 6% public housing and 6% affordable housing in all new private housing developments
- Ensure the proposed changes benefit the existing community and won't disadvantage needy public housing applicants and tenants
- Ensure measures are taken to restrict height, density and improve amenity of development proposals
- Ensure that public and affordable housing is not built to lower standards
- Ensure housing developments are built with appropriate communal space and community facilities

Affordable Housing

- To clarify and inform the community about what kind of affordable housing is planned for the area and who will manage it
- To seek ways to ensure affordable housing remains affordable
- Because the built environment is important to community cohesion and safety, include access to communal space and community facilities to encourage day to day interaction.

Social services and public facilities

Recommendations

- Core funding must be increased and guaranteed to support existing social services, including tenancy, aged, youth, ATSI, mental health and drug and alcohol services
- Increase funding for community development initiatives to support tenants
- Build purpose built facilities to adequately house community services, including youth services
- Retain and restore key public institutions, including Waterloo Post Office, Redfern Post Office, Redfern School and Waterloo school

Problems identified

The Redfern and Waterloo public housing community has a large aged population. The average age is currently estimated to be 59 years. The community also has many residents with complex and multiple needs, such as those with mental health and drug and alcohol issues. Many of these residents live on their own and do not have relatives or others to support them. These issues can cause many residents to be isolated and excluded from accessing main stream services, further increasing social problems such as isolation, fear and anxiety.

The level and targeting of funds to social services has a major impact on the ability of organizations to deliver adequate and responsive services to meet community needs. Specific problems include the lack of growth funding to maximize the utilization of available resources and to identify priorities and respond to changing needs. Targeting funding to specific groups can result in gaps in service delivery, which may result in some groups not receiving services, or exclude people with multiple needs, who may not neatly fit within the defined criteria. A lack of adequate funding and consistent data can result in a lack of effective information sharing and coordination between agencies, a duplication of services, and an imbalance between information/referral services and the delivery of actual services.

Competitive tendering for funding can lead to the squeezing out of smaller agencies that have local history, knowledge and community trust. In the long term this potentially reduces the choice of available services and a reduction in the efficiency sought by the competitive tendering in the first instance.

Government departments sometimes implement infrastructure and processes without regard to adequate staffing levels and or funding levels of other key agencies necessary to the delivery of the services. This can increase staff stress and impact on performance and service delivery. A lack of resources and outreach services on the estates can increase pressure on other agencies, such as the DoH, to address the unmet needs of other services, such as mental health services.

The withdrawal or closure of key public services such as Waterloo Post Office, Redfern School, Waterloo School and Rachel Forster hospital has had a major impact on the Redfern /Waterloo communities. The closure of banks and post offices has taken away the ability of many elderly and disabled tenants to easily

access their money and it has reduced their ability to independently participate within the community. Access to key public institutions is a vital component of the development and vitality of all communities. Given the expected increase in population the restoration of these institutions is vital to support the entire residential population and to attract economic growth to the area.

The above issues were also identified as having a major impact on the delivery of services within the local area in the 1995 report, *"Who Cares? We Care!" Report of the South Sydney Public Housing Taskforce*. We refer you to this report in which a number of similar recommendations were identified.

Actions Proposed

- Conduct and maintain a comprehensive needs based profile that adequately shows the multiple levels of disadvantage within the Redfern and Waterloo communities, so that government agencies have an adequate and consistent source of data to make funding decisions from which to share information. A comprehensive needs based profile would encourage appropriate allocation of funding to existing agencies, including funding for adequate staffing levels and assist to reduce duplication across program areas whilst enabling a balance between information and referral and service provision.

A comprehensive needs based profile of the Redfern and Waterloo communities must include:

- A mental health needs assessment profile
 - Identification of planning models to assist the coordination of services and information exchange between services
 - A Departmental review of methodology used to identify needs to ensure consistency of data across all program areas.
 - Consultation with agencies
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- **Improve access to services:**
 - Increase funding for the delivery of after hours services
 - Increase funds for outreach services to enable proactive service delivery to those who are isolated and those most in need.
 - Increase funding to all areas for preventative programs
 - Increase core funding to enable growth of existing organizations to maximize the use of infrastructure, historical connections, trust and knowledge
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- **Improve community facilities**
 - Build purpose built community facilities, especially for youth services
 - Investigate the co-location of services on the estates
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- **Mental Health /Health**
 - Carry out a mental health needs assessment profile to identify necessary resource allocation
 - Increase funding to provide adequate staffing levels at Redfern Community Health Service
 - Increase funding for outreach and after hours services

- Ensure support for the Joint Guarantee of Service between NSW Health and DoH

➤ **Drug and Alcohol issues**

- Investigate the enhancement of key drug and alcohol services
- Investigate the location of all drug services to ensure appropriate areas are utilized, rather than residential areas
- Provide an appropriate area for the users of the Botany Rd methadone clinic
- Support community driven initiatives to reduce drug and alcohol abuse, including the continued support of the Community Drug Action Taskforce
- Fund education programs on drug issues, including harm minimization
- Establish a liquor accord with local hotels and clubs
- Increase funding for outreach services

Services for the aged and people with disabilities

- Develop Rachel Forster as a nursing home so that frail aged residents can remain living in the area
- Build a purpose built aged and disabled community facility that also meets the needs of members from CALD backgrounds
- Fund existing services to employ community outreach workers on the estates for the aged and people with disabilities to address issues of isolation and to provide information and referral to local services
- Fund existing Neighbour Aid services to support the aged and disabled to access their finances

Youth

- Develop adequate purpose built youth facilities
- Support projects, such as Kidspeak, to increase social interaction and understanding between youth and older residents on the Estates
- Evaluate the effectiveness of the Street Team
- Enhance the relationship between Youth Services and the Street Team

Safety

Key Recommendations

- Adequate street lighting must be provided
- Widen footpaths
- Hold regular community safety audits
- Investigate the closure of some laneways as identified in consultation with the community
- Provide appropriate community spaces and facilities
- Support community driven initiatives to address drug and alcohol issues

Problems identified

The Draft *Redfern Waterloo Community Safety Plan* developed by South Sydney City Council and the Redfern Waterloo Safety Taskforce provides a comprehensive overview of the safety issues faced by the Redfern Waterloo Communities. Community members recognize that reducing crime and improving safety is a complex issue and requires the active participation of many agencies within the community. The Safety plan identifies five key issues and recognizes that adequate funding and resources for planning and coordination, especially youth, family, health, and drug and alcohol services is necessary to strengthen community capacity. Improvements to the urban design and general environment are also key issues identified by residents especially the poor design of community /social space on the estates, and the inability of the Department Housing to adequately maintain buildings such as security doors, lifts and the removal of graffiti. A poor police response on the estates has also been identified as a key safety issue.

Actions Proposed

- Consult with the community regarding safety issues
- Guarantee that recommendations made in the Safety Plan and by the NAB are carried out and adequately resourced
- Investigate ways in which the DoH can improve the maintenance system
- Investigate ways to improve community and social space on the estates in consultation with the community
- Mental Health services must be increased
- Support community development activities including tenant projects
 - Eg: Waterloo Recycling Workshop/Kidspeak
- Improve streetscape access
- Support drug and alcohol initiatives and support services

Employment

Recommendations

- Ensure adequate and appropriate training and apprenticeship opportunities for public housing tenants
- Ensure full and part time employment opportunities for public housing tenants of all ages
- Support vocational support services

Problems identified

Increased employment opportunities for residents of all ages are welcomed. Some employment opportunities, however, can adversely affect public housing tenants on Centrelink payments by increasing their rent payments and by increasing other employment related costs such as, transport, clothing and child care. Employment opportunities must be sufficient to meet these increased costs. Many community members are concerned that there is an increased reliance on volunteers to carry out what was traditionally paid employment within the community. Including the expectation of support for their neighbours, many of whom have complex needs.

As there are many single parent families on the estates, adequate child care is imperative to support employment opportunities.

Actions Proposed

- Ensure genuine opportunities for training and development that increase employment opportunity
- Investigate a variety of employment opportunities, especially full time, permanent employment
- Investigate a variety of apprenticeship and training opportunities
- Improve low cost child care and respite care facilities to support access to training and employment opportunities
- Encourage key agencies such as DoH, SSCC and the UNSW to create employment opportunities for tenants
- Increase training and education opportunities, especially opportunities for tenants to gain formal qualifications
- Improve transport connections to reduce costs
- Improve access to public transport
- Enhance existing youth service's employment programs

Transport

Recommendations

- Public transport must be redirected to get tenants from the estates to hospitals, universities and key public sites
- Increase funding to enable the growth of community transport
- Re-investigate the recommendations made by the Redfern, Waterloo and Surry Hills NABs submission in response to the *Sydney Buses "Better Buses Eastern Suburbs"* proposal in 2001

Problems identified

There is a very low rate of car ownership within the SSCC LGA. This is especially true of public housing tenants and so many must rely on public transport to gain access to essential services such as shopping, hospitals, and educational institutions. The substantial aged population and the many tenants with high support needs are totally reliant on adequate transport services to access these key services. Given the lack of accessible public transport from the estates, many tenants rely on community transport to provide access to essential services, which has increased the pressure on community transport to deliver services with limited resources. As discussed in the employment section of this paper, transport affordability is a key issue for public housing residents

Actions proposed

- Retain public transport on the estates
- Retain pensioner concessions
- Increase funding to existing community transport providers
- Investigate funding for community transport to provide services to people who are not frail aged or disabled

Built environment and streets

Recommendations

- South Sydney City Council to retain control of all development proposals
- Develop the built environment to include easy access for people with disabilities and older people
- Streets must be both pedestrian and bike friendly
- Develop Redfern St as a village centre with affordable retail stores
- Build community facilities such as a swimming pool, picture theater, sporting and games areas or venues
- Retain all existing parks and green spaces on the estates

Problems identified

The Estates are cut off from other parts of the area as they are surrounded by major traffic routes which act as a barrier. Reducing traffic and improving mixed access to the town center, train station, between the two estates and the surrounding area is imperative. Access to green space is identified as an important need as is the need for community facilities that encourage and support social interaction between all age groups. There is also a lack of affordable shopping in the area.

Actions Proposed

- Consult with the community about the kind of community facilities required and the location of such facilities
- Investigate options to redesign the Waterloo shopping center, including plans designed by UNSW CDP students in 2000.
- Investigate the possibility of expanding the Poet's Corner shopping centre, including the co-location of purpose built facilities for social services
- Ensure support for recreational and social programs on the estates. Examples include Kidspeak, Waterloo Recycling Workshop
- Redfern Oval to be unlocked and open for regular public use
- Improve access to Alfred Park
- Encourage a variety of affordable retail outlets, including an affordable supermarket
- Ensure multiple/mixed access to the train station and streets
- The NAB supports the concept of RED Square
- Develop Redfern Street as a village centre with mixed access
- Reduce traffic impacts: investigate tunneling Regent and Gibbons Sts underground; investigate reducing traffic through Elizabeth St
- Include a Rail & Bus interchange
- Widen streets and increase greenery
- Paint speed humps around the Estates
- Include carparkes especially to support the proposed shopping area
- Consider heritage and environment issues in consultation with the community
- Improve use and access of community spaces on the estates
- Provide extra seating on the estates
- Investigate the co -location of social/community services