

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

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**Theme:**

**Summary**

# **SOCIAL ISSUES/PROBLEMS IN REDFERN AND SOUTH SYDNEY**

## **A SUBMISSION FROM THE EXODUS FOUNDATION**

### **1. INTRODUCTION**

This submission is made by the Exodus Foundation following a meeting between Helen Disney, executives of the Exodus Foundation and other interested parties from Redfern on the 10<sup>th</sup> of March 2004.

The submission attempts to review the problems currently existing in Redfern and their causes and suggest ways in which the Exodus Foundation can be part of their solution.

### **2. GENERAL OBSERVATIONS ON THE CURRENT SITUATION IN REDFERN**

- 2.1 Redfern is currently a complex cocktail of social problems. These include unemployment, drug and alcohol abuse, poor health, child neglect and low education achievement, crime and a volatile political environment.
- 2.2 The predominantly Aboriginal population has ensured that the problems are highly politicized and has created a unique "them and us" environment which hinders solutions.
- 2.3 The problems are also unique in that they are concentrated in one area. Property gentrification has tended to disperse most disadvantaged people throughout Sydney's poorer suburbs. By contrast the disadvantaged of Redfern are largely trapped in the area or surrounding suburbs thus highlighting their problems and creating a more explosive atmosphere. This is not say, however, that the problems would be solved by dispersement.
- 2.4 Paradoxically the concentration of disadvantaged people has not created a community that is at peace or working together.
- 2.5 Welfare services are available in plenty but in a disintegrated form. Just as the problems of the disadvantaged are inter-related (e.g. drug addiction leads to crime and ill health) so should the welfare services be more intergrated and user friendly.
- 2.6 Redfern has become symbolic for Aboriginal people in New South Wales, the symbolism is illusory and problematical. Any attempt to remove this symbolism would probably fail.
- 2.7 The Redfern community is divided on many issues and this has prevented achieving solutions that would follow from a united peoples.

- 2.8 Government agency resources and funds have been generously invested in Redfern. Their effectiveness has been hampered in part by their lack of integration and in part by their lack of intimacy with their clients.

### **3. GENERAL RECCOMENDATIONS**

There is no easy or quick solution to the problems of Redfern. The road to resolution can however be started now and simply by concentrating on the following matters:

- **Provide welfare/education and health services in an integrated and holistic manner.**
- **Make the education of children in Redfern the priority. By education is meant both conventional and social/life skills education. This “education” needs to be provided in an appropriate manner.**
- **Create a united community by leadership and vision.**

#### **4. THE RELEVANCE OF THE EXODUS FOUNDATION TO REDFERN.**

- 4.1 The founder of the Exodus Foundation, Bill Crews, has had a long involvement with Redfern beginning with his time at the Wayside Chapel. He is well known and respected by many members of the Redfern community.
- 4.2 The Exodus Foundation at Ashfield has created a unique example of integrated social, health and education services. Our clients come to Ashfield because they feel safe and loved and because we have pioneered a welfare centre where many vital government agencies work from our centre – thus enabling our clients to avoid seeking help in what are perceived as unfriendly government offices dispersed over the Inner West of Sydney.
- 4.3 Many of our clients are members of the Redfern Community who find our services more appropriate to their needs.
- 4.4 Volunteers from the Foundation are currently providing welfare services in Redfern with some material support from the Foundation.

#### **5. HOW EXODUS CAN HELP IN REDFERN**

It is not claimed that the replication of the Exodus Foundation in Redfern would immediately solve or begin to solve the problems of Redfern.

Clearly any involvement of the Foundation would need to be tailored to suit the different needs of Redfern.

But it is considered that the Exodus model of integration and focus on children is the basis for any resolution.

The involvement of Exodus in Redfern could take one or more of the following forms:

- Design and management of a new Welfare centre

- Development of new education centres for both young children with literacy problems and teenagers with more serious problems.
- Provide a training and consultancy service although we would need to be assured that such service provided us with sufficient authority to achieve successful outcomes.

## **6. CONCLUSION**

We trust that this submission has provided useful views and recommendations and look forward to discussing it in more detail at an appropriate time.