

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

**Organisation:**

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**Theme:**

**Summary**

## **Terms Of Reference.**

### **Inquiry Into Issues Relating To Redfern – Waterloo.**

#### **Brief Summary.**

With just on 40 Police Officers needing medical attention, some reasonably serious, one Officer incurring a potentially life threatening injury, one residents car burnt to the ground, two Police cars trashed and Redfern Railway Station on fire with the whole episode lasting 7-8 hours and only two arrests at the scene. Then the senior Police Management had the audacity to state they had it all under control!!!.

What a comment to make when the whole episode was on National Television for not only the whole of Australia to see this disgraceful blight on our country, but also a lot of the English speaking World would have been viewing highlights of it as well. The comment was ill informed and just plain rubbish!!.

I lay the blame for this disgraceful episode squarely at the feet of the inept Senior Police Management for not having the will or ability to round up the ringleaders and removing them from the area before it got out of control. Which happened within the first couple of hours. Equally to blame was these self serving, self appointed, intellectually bankrupt so called "Aboriginal Community Leaders". Who instead of acting in a responsible manner in calming down the rioters. A large group of them actually urged on the rioters.

Of course the catalyst for this riot was the drug dealers and the alcohol problem which is endemic within the Indigenous community in Redfern and the Waterloo areas, they played a major part in initially fuelling this riot.

I believe the Aboriginal Community in Redfern like every where else in Australia is over serviced, by Federal, State, Local Government Agencies, and the plethora of other so called voluntary Agencies.

There should be one over arching single contact point for the people in Redfern and the Waterloo areas. That contact point should be The N.S.W. Department Of Aboriginal Affairs. With an office in Redfern. This office can filter out all enquiries from residents to the relevant specialist Agencies such as the Medical, Legal, Housing Education Health and the various specialist groups.

Education, all of the Aboriginal children of school age should attend school every day not when ever it is just convenient, which is what is currently happening.

The block area should be restored to current best practice standards with the local community members employed by the building contractors to give them additional work skills. Which will assist them in obtaining long term employment.

The reason for my interest in this inquiry is my Grandparents and Parents arrived in the Redfern area in the mid 1930's. Living in Lawson, Caroline and Abercrombie Streets. Another factor for my interest is my Mother's family are Indigenous Australians, the Wonnarua people from Singleton NSW. So we as a family have a reasonably in depth knowledge of the Redfern area, having lived there for over 54 years.

Before I cover the points of the Terms Of Reference for the inquiry. I would respectfully request that the members of the committee if they have not already seen the television news coverage of the Redfern riot or read some of the print media articles of this debacle I strongly urge you to do so. One particular excellent television coverage of the event was the ABC's Four Corners Program on Monday Night March 29 2004. This program and the television news coverage of the riot in Redfern. Gives a graphic visual picture of what happened, who were the ring leaders, why did it happen and sadly the incompetence of the senior Police Management.

The newspaper articles on the riot do give some interesting public comments from former Police officers about the problems in Redfern and the performance of the Police senior Management at the scene, and there are some other interesting observations by the public and journalists.

## **Terms Of Reference**

### **Policing Strategies**

The programs that I have detailed above (TV and Print Media) highlight in graphic detail the appalling mismanagement by the senior Police at the scene of the Redfern riot, on that Sunday night February 15<sup>th</sup> 2004.

### **My Observations and proposals are :-**

(a) Police Senior Management are poorly trained in how to manage, control, and put down (safely) major urban riots.

(b) Senior Police either do not have the ability or the will to clean out the drug dealers from the Redfern area, or maybe they are just trying to be politically correct in not "upsetting" the Aboriginal community by so called "perceived" racial harassment.

What ever is their excuse, they have failed miserably in their sworn duty of care to uphold and enforce the law, protect the innocent and arrest the law breakers.

(c) I would replace the current senior Police Management in the Redfern Command, I refer to Assistant Commissioner Waites and Superintendent Smith and other senior Police in Redfern. In their place I would install more experienced Police officers who were better trained in controlling major mob violence and have a more in depth knowledge of Aboriginal culture.

(d) In the Redfern local Police command, I would ensure Police riot gear i.e. riot shields, head and body protective equipment etc., were available in sufficient quantities for **ALL** members of the Redfern command.

(e) The new Police Management at Redfern should be instructed to use whatever resources are necessary to clean out and arrest all drug dealers from the Redfern-Waterloo area, as a matter of urgency. Otherwise any plans or programs to clean up the Redfern area will fail.

(f) When future mob riots occur in the Redfern area, as they surely will. Police Management should be instructed by the NSW Government to close down these riots immediately. Using whatever resources are necessary. Such as Fire trucks, riot gear, etc., and arrest **ALL** the riot instigators and major participants **AT** the scene, not chase after them **TWO WEEKS LATER**.

(g) The current Police mentoring program with children of the "Block area". As commendable as it is should be terminated immediately. It is not the Police Officer's job, and I see no long term benefit for either the Police or the children. It would be more beneficial to ensure the children attended school everyday, even that is not a Police Officer's job.

(h) The one major positive coming from the Redfern Command is the Police high profile in the Redfern and Waterloo area. This is an excellent strategy and has obviously upset the local drug dealers. Which was one of the major catalyst that fuelled the Redfern riots.

(i) Finally another take out from these Redfern riots, is with Australia high on the list for a potential terrorist threat in the not too distant future. All NSW Police officers in particular senior Police should receive more intensive training on how to manage and put down major urban violence.

## Government Programs

(a) I have heard unofficially there are just on 30 – 40 Agencies servicing the Redfern – Waterloo area. That covers Government and non Government groups.

This is just ridiculous and it is no wonder there is high unemployment rate in the area. Why would the people look for work. With all these Agencies falling over themselves to provide a plethora of services to the community, at no cost to the people in Redfern, but just take it out of the taxpayers wallets and purses.

I would replace all these Agencies and give the people in Redfern – Waterloo ONE CONTACT POINT. For all services such as Legal Aid, Housing, Health, Education, and Financial.

With the impending demise of ATSIC I would make the one contact point to be the NSW Department Of Aboriginal Affairs, with an office in Redfern. They would be the over arching Agency to after the initial consultation with each client re direct them to the appropriate Agency for the client, and be responsible for the follow up for future queries for the client.

What this all means is once each client has gone through the initial consultation with the Department Of Aboriginal Affairs and the respective Agency. Any further queries the client has, they just have to talk to one contact point not a myriad of Agencies. This proposal is more business like and an efficient way of providing services to the Aboriginal community, and it is more cost efficient.

(b) The following are just some of the examples of the myriad of Agencies servicing the Redfern – Waterloo area.:-

(1) NSW Aboriginal Land Council the controlling agency of the 120 land councils in NSW.

(2) Aboriginal Health and Medical Research Council also known as the Aboriginal Medical Service.

(4) NSW Department of Aboriginal Affairs.

(5) Aboriginal Youth Project Grants by the crime prevention division of the NSW Attorney General's Office.

(6) Aboriginal Legal Aid.

(7) ATSIC in May 2003 provided \$400,000 to add to the \$1.1 million the Redfern Aboriginal Corporation had set aside to buy an Administration building in Chippendale.

(8) Aboriginal Education Unit NSW. Which is part of the NSW Education Department.

Plus numerous other Government and voluntary Agencies.

One of the major criticisms the ATSIC Review Committee which included Jackie Huggins, John Hannaford and Bob Collins. Made in their review of ATSIC for the then Federal Minister for Aboriginal Affairs Mr Phillip Ruddock.. Was "With just on 460,410 Indigenous people in Australia being serviced by between 4000-6000 Agencies there are just too many Agencies to efficiently service the Indigenous population.

My view is the same can be said of the situation in Redfern.

### **Drug and Alcohol Rehabilitation Program.**

(c) The NSW Government needs to implement a Drug and Alcohol Rehabilitation Program for the Aboriginal Community in Redfern – Waterloo area immediately. For if we procrastinate and drag our feet on this insidious life threatening problem which is rampant within our young people in Redfern. We will have an horrendous health problem in the Redfern – Waterloo area.

The next step up from drugs and alcohol is glue sniffing, petrol sniffing and even paint sniffing.

### **Education**

(d) It is quite evident illiteracy is rampant in the Redfern area with both adults and children. There needs to be a major focus on ensuring school aged children attend school every day not just occasionally as is the current case in Redfern.

We should do whatever it takes to make this happen. Otherwise we will be condemning these children to a future life of unemployment, despair, poverty, alcohol

and substance abuse and of course alienation from the mainstream Australian community.

## **Unemployment “The Block”**

As most of the adult population in Redfern are currently on some level of Social Security benefits. I would propose we use Federal, State and ATSI funds to employ building contractors to rebuild the “Block” area to current best practice standards. With the local community members employed by the building contractors. To give them additional work skills, and assist them in obtaining long term employment.

## **Aboriginal Community Leaders.**

The current so called “Aboriginal Community Leaders” in the Redfern – Waterloo area instead of being part of the solution, they are in the main part of the problem. These self appointed, self serving and intellectually bankrupt people should be ignored. As an example a Senior Aboriginal Community Leader was quoted in the daily press as saying “The streets were taken by our young people and we are all proud” In place of these current Community Leaders I propose we Approach Mr Warren Mundine, Linda Burney MP, Verónica Graf, and Rod Towney. To act as Counsellors/Consultants for the people of Redfern – Waterloo area. Until a degree of normalcy returns to the area and then new Community Leaders can be elected.

## **Media Reports Regarding Police Management at the riot scene.**

To support my view that the Police Senior Management need to be replaced. I refer members to an article in the Daily Telegraph Monday February 23 2004. Written by Angela Kamper. The headline states “Now the Police Are Angry, Officers claim they were ill equipped and given no leadership in handling the angry mob.”

Some of the take outs from the article were:-

- (1) Lack of plan to guard the Police from a crowd of 100+ people.
- (2) Actions of Senior Police who “stood around in a circle on their mobile phones instead of directing operations.”
- (3) Lack of leadership at the scene where so many Police were injured and NO ARRESTS WERE MADE.