

Chapter 6 Future for Redfern and Waterloo

A point we would like to make in relation to world competitiveness is that successful global cities require attractive living and working environments and they require social, stable, equitable social settings. It is really incongruous to have a prosperous city with social isolation and non-cohesion of local communities. Getting the balance right in Redfern-Waterloo and getting the balance right across Sydney are very much key elements of keeping Sydney a competitive world city.⁵⁷⁵

The Committee has heard throughout this Inquiry that the priority issues for Redfern and Waterloo are also the issues creating the greatest challenges. While there are many short to medium term issues facing the area, the substantial concerns are longer term, requiring a far sighted strategic response. The long term issues that need to be addressed include social inclusion, urban renewal, affordable housing and employment opportunity. The recent establishment of the Redfern Waterloo Authority and the extension and increased resourcing of the Redfern Waterloo Partnership Project provide a structure to guide a long term response for the area. However, without appropriate measures, the Committee believes there will only be limited success in addressing the issues confronting Redfern and Waterloo. In this chapter we canvass what we believe these measures to be. We consider the importance of strategic planning, performance evaluation, and transparency in government, and the need for joint work with the non government sector and the community. The chapter ends with a call for a future parliamentary committee review and for the continuation of broad political support in addressing the social disadvantage in the Aboriginal community of Redfern and Waterloo.

A sustainable future

6.1 One of the key issues facing the Government is ensuring a sustainable future for Redfern and Waterloo. The Planning Institute of Australia's 2004 policy document, *Liveable Communities*,⁵⁷⁶ sets out in detail the indicators that should be taken into account to ensure social, economic and environmental sustainability. Ms Elizabeth Rice from the Institute suggested that indicators for social sustainability in Redfern and Waterloo are:

- access to a quality public transport service
- tolerable divergence in socio-economic indicators
- comparable living standards in Aboriginal communities
- accessible urban public domain per capita
- alleviation of housing stress.⁵⁷⁷

⁵⁷⁵ Mr Peter Laybutt, Chair, Metropolitan Policy Sub Committee, Planning Institute of Australia (NSW Division), Evidence, 22 October 2004, p6

⁵⁷⁶ Planning Institute of Australia, *Liveable Communities: How the Commonwealth can Foster Sustainable Cities and Regions - a National Policy Statement by the Planning Institute of Australia*, February 2004

⁵⁷⁷ Ms Elizabeth Rice, Member, Planning Institute of Australia (NSW Division), Evidence, 22 October 2004, p2

6.2 Ms Rice told the Committee:

[A]lthough we have listed those areas of sustainability separately, we stress that in practice there are many inter-relationships among them. They need to be reflected in the planning budgeting and evaluations associated with them.⁵⁷⁸

6.3 At a private briefing with the Committee, members of the South Sydney Interagency also stressed the importance of ensuring there is an inter-relationship between the social and physical development of the area. One participant said:

I just wanted to revisit the first question which was about the establishment of the Redfern-Waterloo Authority to say that I believe it would be helpful if this inquiry recommended that the Authority work in combination with the Redfern/Waterloo Partnership Project ... I think keeping the social side and the physical development side separate will be a bad outcome for community development in this area and that the combination of those two things might give the social development access to the resources that are being freed up by the physical development so that we could actually get that dividend back into the community in terms of that social capital ...⁵⁷⁹

6.4 Mr Peter Laybutt, Chair of the Planning Institute's Metropolitan Policy Subcommittee, argued that the Redfern and Waterloo communities need a strategic plan to drive the Government's vision for the area, and that this local plan must be integrated into the broader strategy being developed for the whole of metropolitan Sydney.⁵⁸⁰

6.5 The Government, through the Department of Infrastructure, Planning and Natural Resources, is currently developing a Metropolitan Strategy to guide planning and decision making in the greater metropolitan region over the next 30 years. At the Sydney Futures Forum and the Local Government Forum held in mid 2004, eight key issues were identified for the Metropolitan Strategy to address. These included urban growth, housing, employment and infrastructure. Under the Strategy, nine directions for managing the changing region have now been identified to respond to these issues. They include: Direction 5, to renew existing areas; Direction 6, to strengthen employment centres and precincts; and Direction 8, to target infrastructure. The directions form the basis of a discussion paper which invites comment up until 31 December 2004, and the Metropolitan Strategy is expected to be released in early 2005.⁵⁸¹

6.6 Another of the key planning issues is to ensure that all three levels of government are involved. Again, the Planning Institute suggested why a tripartite approach is so necessary:

The tripartite approach is important because all three levels of government contribute to the factors that influence social, environmental and economic sustainability, and they all carry out activities that impact on the use of space and whether the space can be used for the activities the community has decided it wants. The role of the State and local government are often recognised here partly because they are such big

⁵⁷⁸ Ms Rice, Evidence, 22 October 2004, p2

⁵⁷⁹ Participant, South Sydney Interagency, 3 November 2004, p26

⁵⁸⁰ Mr Laybutt, Evidence, 22 October 2004, p6

⁵⁸¹ Department of Infrastructure, Planning and Natural Resources, *Planning for a Better Future: Metropolitan Strategy - Discussion Paper*, www.metrostrategy.nsw.gov.au (accessed 6 December 2004)

service providers, but the Commonwealth also has a critical role because it controls major policy areas affecting how liveable and sustainable our cities will be. Those areas include economic policy, taxation policy, income security policy, immigration policy—which has a huge effect on settlement patterns—major infrastructure proposals and considerable funding for hospitals and schools.⁵⁸²

6.7 In its submission to the Inquiry provided to the Committee in April, New South Wales Council of Social Services (NCOSS) proposed a number of elements that it believed should be contained in a plan aimed at urban regeneration in Redfern and Waterloo:

- an agreement to retain a sizable portion of affordable housing in the public and private sectors in the future (possibly as high as 40% of all stock)
- an agreement to redevelop the Block with mixed housing, services and open space
- the redevelopment of Redfern railway station and its surrounds with a focus on creating an expanded retail precinct
- a Redfern Waterloo enterprise and employment development strategy which assists local businesses to expand, targets new job opportunities to unemployed and underemployed local residents
- a Redfern Waterloo non government organisation risk management advice and support service
- the use of key surplus NSW Government owned properties in the suburbs, by new, relocated or co-located human services and community facilities.⁵⁸³

6.8 As noted in the previous chapter, NCOSS has also stressed that genuine sustainable development in Redfern and Waterloo will require the conduct of specific social impact assessments on all significant development proposals.⁵⁸⁴

6.9 The Committee notes that a number of these elements are contained in the Government announcements on the establishment of the Redfern Waterloo Authority and the Jobs Plan.⁵⁸⁵ We encourage the NSW Government to continue to work with peak organisations such as NCOSS in devising the details of its plans for Redfern and Waterloo, including the Redfern-Waterloo Plan 2004-2014, the Human Services Plan and the Jobs Plan.

6.10 The Committee strongly believes that the Government must establish short, medium and long term strategic objectives for the area, along with key outcomes associated with those objectives. As raised early in the Report in the context of the Redfern Waterloo Partnership Project, effective planning and a formal performance evaluation process will be essential to ensuring that the issues facing the area are addressed. It is also crucial that the various Plans

⁵⁸² Ms Rice, Evidence, 22 October 2004, p7

⁵⁸³ Submission 56, NCOSS, pp2-3

⁵⁸⁴ Email from Mr Gary Moore, Director, NCOSS, to Director, 7 December 2004

⁵⁸⁵ Hon Frank Sartor MP, Legislative Assembly, New South Wales, *Hansard*, 11 November 2004, p12740; Hon Frank Sartor MP and Hon Carmel Tebbutt MLC, 'Government announces jobs plan for Redfern Waterloo', *Media Release*, 10 November 2004

are integrated, so as to ensure a cohesive approach to the long term social, environmental and economic sustainability of Redfern and Waterloo. Correspondingly, as discussed in Chapter 5, the set of indicators to be established by the Government must relate not only to individual programs and services, but also to the broad vision for the area. The Government's performance against its strategic objectives and key outcomes should be regularly reviewed and, as discussed in the section below, made publicly available. In addition, the Committee calls for the redevelopment plan for Redfern and Waterloo to fit within the broader Metropolitan Strategy.

- 6.11** In relation to the involvement of all levels of government, the Committee recognises that it is difficult to achieve an overarching policy framework which encompasses all levels of government. Nevertheless, we strongly believe that every effort should be made to ensure that a broad strategic plan is in place that allows for appropriate contributions from the Commonwealth and local governments.

Recommendation 32

That the NSW Government, through the Redfern Waterloo Authority and the Redfern Waterloo Partnership Project, establish short, medium and long term strategic objectives for the area and key outcomes associated with those objectives. In addition, the Government's performance against these objectives should be regularly reviewed and reported to the public.

Recommendation 33

That the NSW Government ensure that the Redfern Waterloo Plan 2004-2014 is integrated into the broader Metropolitan Strategy.

Recommendation 34

That the NSW Government, through the Redfern Waterloo Authority and the Redfern Waterloo Partnership Project, ensure that the strategic plans for the Redfern and Waterloo area identify and allow for the active involvement of local, State and Commonwealth Governments.

Transparency in government

- 6.12** Throughout this Inquiry, considerable criticism has been made of the Government's slowness or failure to release particular plans, strategies, reports and accountability measures. In our Interim Report we made 22 recommendations, a number of which called for the completion and release of particular strategies, reports or other documents.
- 6.13** The Committee believes that a major problem is the lack of trust the community has in the Government and in particular the RWPP. One of the reasons for this lack of trust is that information is not being made available to relevant stakeholders, particularly the non government sector and the general community. The failure to release information, particularly information promised to the community, gives the impression that the Government has something to hide or has a secret agenda.

6.14 The Human Services Review is one example, but there are numerous others. While the report of the Human Services Review did eventuate in November, there was a considerable delay in its release. There was very little communication with the community about the reasons for the delay or projected release dates. The lack of communication led many people to believe that the report would never be made public. Many witnesses told us about their fears, with some people deeply concerned that the silence from Government on the Human Services Review could only mean bad news for local services. While some of this concern may, with hindsight, have been misguided, the Committee understands the reasons for the anxiety. As we reported in Chapter 3, a member of the South Sydney Interagency, giving evidence prior to the release of the report on the Human Services Review, explained it this way:

Can I say because substantial time and effort has been invested in participating in the consultation with the Partnership Project and more recently the Morgan Disney exercise, out of which, without explanation and contrary to written assurances which were given up front to the participants, no report back has been made available. Leaving people with the obvious question, well, what are they actually planning to do and why is it a secret, and therefore, although it may be incorrect, the perception that there is a potential threat to the funding security to those who speak out in the way which may be unpopular, is based on that fact.⁵⁸⁶

6.15 The Committee strongly believes that the Government, through both the RWA and the RWPP, must be more transparent in its operations and workings with stakeholders, including the general community. This will be central to the development and maintenance of partnerships between the various parties involved in the area. We acknowledge that the Government has a difficult task in coordinating service delivery in the area and that, on occasion, difficult decisions must be made. We also note that many decisions will not be to the satisfaction of all sections of the community. We believe, however, that without a higher level of transparency and therefore accountability to the community, very little will change in the Government's relationship with the community and other stakeholders. The RWA and RWPP must earn the trust of the community, and respect the right of the community to information and a share in decision-making processes.

⁵⁸⁶ Participant, South Sydney Interagency, 3 November 2004, p5

Recommendation 35

That the NSW Government, through the Redfern Waterloo Authority and the Redfern Waterloo Partnership Project, make a commitment to the Redfern and Waterloo community to make all plans, strategies, reports and accountability measures publicly available in a timely manner. In particular the NSW Government should release the following plans, strategies and documents as soon as they are completed:

- the Redfern Waterloo Plan 2004-2014
 - the Redfern Waterloo Partnership Project Business Plan
 - the Jobs Plan
 - the Human Services Plan
 - strategic objectives and outcomes for the area as a whole.
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Working with the non government sector and the community

- 6.16** Related to the issue of transparency, the Committee believes that the Government must significantly improve its relationships and partnerships with the non government sector and the communities in Redfern and Waterloo. One of the clearest messages provided to the Committee, particularly in the second stage of the inquiry process, is that non government agencies feel disenfranchised from decision-making processes for service delivery in the area. The Committee is left with the impression that non government organisations do not believe their role is valued.
- 6.17** In our dealings with the sector throughout this Inquiry, we have witnessed the profound commitment of non government agencies to the Redfern and Waterloo community. Many of these services are striving to meet significant levels of need on extremely tight budgets, sometimes in less than adequate premises, with a complex range of reporting and accountability requirements.
- 6.18** As we emphasised in Chapter 3, the Government, both through the Redfern Waterloo Partnership Project and the Redfern Waterloo Authority, must find better ways to engage with the non government sector. The Government has now established two coordinating bodies with access to considerable resources, and the Committee can see no reason why appropriate consultation and communication should not occur, notwithstanding the right and indeed the responsibility of government to make decisions and ensure that action occurs. We welcome the comments made by Minister Sartor during the debate on the Redfern Waterloo Authority Bill 2004 that:

[T]he communities of Redfern and Waterloo want to see some progress. As I said, much more consultation will be conducted, but we must monitor progress.⁵⁸⁷

⁵⁸⁷ Hon Frank Sartor MP, Legislative Assembly, New South Wales, *Hansard*, 19 November 2004, p13275

- 6.19** The Committee strongly supports these comments made by the Minister and emphasises that the Government must do more than consult. The Redfern Waterloo Partnership Project has consulted widely, so much so that some non government agencies told us they were suffering ‘consultation fatigue’. The consultation process is only useful where the participants’ views are considered and responded to.
- 6.20** Engagement and consultation with non government agencies is not simply important for the democratic process, but it will also help ensure the effectiveness of the Government’s plans. The Committee believes that given the significant role that non government services play in Redfern and Waterloo, the RWA and the RWPP must establish genuine partnership arrangements with them. Without the inclusion and support of all agencies, and particularly those from the non government sector, tackling the significant social disadvantage will be seriously hampered. This is addressed in the Recommendation below.

Community engagement

- 6.21** Perhaps one of the greatest challenges facing the Redfern Waterloo Partnership Project and the Redfern Waterloo Authority is engaging the incredibly diverse communities in the area. As has been pointed out by us and others, there is an extremely diverse social mix in the area, across ethnicity, age and income level.
- 6.22** There are many communities in the area and during our relatively short Inquiry we heard from a small representation of those communities, including people living in public housing, Indigenous people, the Russian-speaking community, young people and community action groups. While acknowledging the difficult task ahead for the Government, we urge the RWA and RWPP to continue to engage with the local communities in the area. The provision of clear and regular information on the Government’s intentions, plans and decisions, matched with accessible and regular consultations, will go a long way to ensuring that community members are engaged in the process of change to the suburbs in which they live. Again this is a matter of both democracy and effectiveness. As Ms Rice of the Planning Institute noted, community engagement is an important ethical requirement but also a practical one, due to the considerable local knowledge and experience in the community:

Unless this expertise is drawn upon, valuable local perspectives on the causes of problems in the area and the most effective local ways of meeting them are lost. There is nothing worse than coming up with the right answer to the wrong problem.⁵⁸⁸

- 6.23** The Committee notes that there are many active community groups in the Redfern and Waterloo area. These include the Waterloo and Redfern Neighbourhood Advisory Boards (NABs), REDWatch and the Vine and Hugo Action Group. These groups have all made a considerable contribution to this Inquiry and provide useful forums through which to reach the Redfern and Waterloo communities. As the Redfern NAB said in its submission:

Community consultation and active 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.⁵⁸⁹

⁵⁸⁸ Ms Rice, Evidence, 22 October 2004, p2

⁵⁸⁹ Submission 30, Redfern Neighbourhood Advisory Board, p3

6.24 Despite her considerable criticism of the RWA, Ms Clover Moore MP was optimistic about changes in community perceptions occurring in Redfern and Waterloo. Ms Moore told the Parliament in October:

For the first time since 1999, community feedback tells me that things are beginning to improve. I urge the Government to ensure that the proposed new Redfern Waterloo Authority builds on this progress.⁵⁹⁰

6.25 The Committee acknowledges the comments made by Minister Sartor that community consultation is a significant issue for the RWA and will be a ‘pretty vital part of this exercise’:

The Government is committed to ensuring that the community will be consulted on, for example, development of the Redfern-Waterloo Plan.⁵⁹¹

6.26 In relation to the involvement and engagement of all stakeholders in Redfern and Waterloo, the Committee reiterates Recommendation 2 in our Interim Report.

Recommendation 36

That the NSW Government, through the Redfern Waterloo Partnership Project and the Redfern Waterloo Authority, take all possible steps to achieve genuine partnership between State and Commonwealth agencies, the City of Sydney Council, the non government sector and the local community in order to address the issues facing Redfern and Waterloo.

Future parliamentary committee review

6.27 Since the Inquiry began, a number of important and ambitious initiatives have been announced that seek to carve out a new future for Redfern and Waterloo. During the year, the Government has announced a range of strategies on policing, planning and infrastructure and human service delivery. The issues facing the area, along with measures proposed to address the problems, have been the subject of this Inquiry and our two reports.

6.28 The Committee commends the Government for its response to the complex issues facing the area. While the Committee has been able to make a number of recommendations on specific issues, we have not been able to fully assess the impact or the efficacy of the new strategic framework for the area. Initiatives such as the RWA, the Redfern Waterloo Plan and the Human Services Plan are all in their embryonic stages and it will be some time before their effectiveness can be assessed. Given the valuable role that a Legislative Council committee can play in the review of the Government’s legislative and policy initiatives, we believe that it would be appropriate for a further review to be conducted by a parliamentary committee in 12 to 18 months time.

⁵⁹⁰ Ms Clover Moore MP, Legislative Assembly, New South Wales, *Hansard*, 28 October 2004, p61

⁵⁹¹ Hon Frank Sartor MP, Legislative Assembly, New South Wales, *Hansard*, 19 November 2004, p13272

Recommendation 37

That a further parliamentary inquiry into issues in Redfern and Waterloo and measures taken to address them be conducted in 2006.

Broad political commitment to Aboriginal people

6.29 This Inquiry came to the Social Issues Committee as a result of the tragic death of a young Aboriginal man. The events of 14-16 February including the 'Redfern riot' shed light on the degree of unrest among some in the Aboriginal community, particularly in the Redfern area. This Inquiry has highlighted issues that have been raised many times about the considerable disadvantage experienced by the Aboriginal community. The statistics on unemployment, morbidity and mortality, drug and alcohol misuse, imprisonment and so on among Aboriginal people in Redfern and Waterloo, and across New South Wales, should be deeply disturbing to us all.

6.30 Just as the Government needs to find a new way forward with non government agencies and the broader community, it must establish a new relationship with the Aboriginal people of Redfern and Waterloo.

6.31 The Committee notes that Government, Opposition, Cross Bench and Independent members of Parliament throughout the recent debate on the RWA have acknowledged the serious social disadvantage affecting Aboriginal people and the need to address this disadvantage. In his Second Reading speech on the Redfern Waterloo Authority Bill, Minister Sartor said:

Social disadvantage is also a problem in the Aboriginal communities of Redfern and Waterloo. The New South Wales Government is committed to delivering the long-term changes needed in the area and delivering an improved quality of life for all residents.⁵⁹²

6.32 In his speech on the same Bill, Mr Brad Hazzard MP said:

As shadow Minister for Aboriginal Affairs for about nine years, I have regularly raised in this place social disadvantage issues affecting Aboriginal people. ... It is my view, which I have carried through with the Opposition for nine years now, that as far as is practicable there should be bipartisan support for measures to address issues that disadvantage Aboriginal people.⁵⁹³

6.33 Thus both major parties have acknowledged the difficulties facing Aboriginal people, and the Committee believes that the time has come for us all to acknowledge and harness the Aboriginal community's strengths. During a private briefing with the Committee, members of the Koori South Eastern Sydney Interagency challenged all parties to find a new level of respect for the Aboriginal community, including the recognition of its strengths. Pastor Ray Minniecon spoke of how the Government had said after the riot that it would give '110

⁵⁹² Hon Frank Sartor MP, Legislative Assembly, New South Wales, *Hansard*, 11 November 2004, p12740

⁵⁹³ Mr Brad Hazzard MP, Legislative Assembly, New South Wales, *Hansard*, 17 November 2004, p13036

percent support' to the police in Redfern. Pastor Minniecon emphasised, 'what I'm asking for ... is 120 percent support for the Aboriginal community and those organisations that are represented here today.'⁵⁹⁴

- 6.34** Given the circumstances surrounding the referral of this Inquiry to our Committee, we consider that there is a tremendous imperative to seek a commitment from all sectors of politics in New South Wales to work together with the Aboriginal community to address the issues facing their community. Redfern and Waterloo have a particular significance for the Indigenous community, as suggested by the only Aboriginal member of the NSW Parliament, Ms Linda Burney MP:

Redfern holds a special place in the hearts and minds of Indigenous people, not just throughout Sydney and New South Wales but right across the whole country. It is a symbolic place, and regard should be paid to its symbolism and history, not only to its social circumstances that are so clearly evident. The Redfern-Waterloo area is truly the birthplace of self-determination in Australia.⁵⁹⁵

- 6.35** The establishment of the Redfern Waterloo Authority together with the Redfern Waterloo Partnership Project presents an opportunity to take a lead in reversing the significant social disadvantage, making a positive difference to the lives of Aboriginal people in the area, and creating a new future for Aboriginal people in this State. Of course, the Aboriginal community must be directly involved in determining the necessary action. However, without broad political agreement, very little can be achieved. As Aboriginal elder Ms Joyce Ingram told the Committee in May:

[W]hat I want to see is decent houses, backyards and clotheslines for all people, and especially for our children, because they are our future.⁵⁹⁶

Recommendation 38

That the NSW Government take the lead in encouraging all political parties and independents to adopt an ongoing commitment to Indigenous issues and work cooperatively with the Aboriginal community to address the serious social disadvantage affecting Aboriginal people.

⁵⁹⁴ Pastor Ray Minniecon, Koori South Eastern Sydney Interagency, 15 October 2004, p27

⁵⁹⁵ Ms Linda Burney MP, Legislative Assembly, New South Wales, *Hansard*, 17 November 2004, p13036

⁵⁹⁶ Ms Joyce Ingram, Evidence, 19 May 2004, p33