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TO: The Redfern-Waterloo Authority, PO Box 3332, Redfern 2016

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RE: Redfern Waterloo Authority (RWA)'s 2005 / 2006 proposals for the Redfern / Waterloo area, subsequently called the RWA-plan.

Dear RWA,

I am writing in response to your Built Environment Plan (BEP), your State Environmental Planning Policy (SEPP) as well as your Employment plan and the whole concept that the RWA is proposing. Given the source of much of the funding and the type of proposals that have reached the press, the RWA-plan seems to be a federally driven initiative.

I work and attend church in the Redfern / Waterloo area. I am a member of several groups in this area and enjoy the safe and friendly atmosphere that Redfern provides. As I do not own a home in the area, I am not subject to conflict-of-interest situations that may occur should house prices increase substantially.

Executive Overview: I believe the RWA-plan will have a negative effect on Australia's fragile economy. The planning items that are provided are deceitful and much of what would constitute a plan is not provided. It would appear that the RWA-plan targets the Aboriginal population of the Redfern Waterloo area in a vindictive way that is consistent with the election speeches Howard has made in the last dozen years.

International statistics indicate that the RWA-plan would do nothing to reduce drug and crime problems in the Redfern Waterloo area or in any other part of Australia. It is apparent that pollution levels will increase under the RWA-plan. The RWA-plan does little to meet the genuine needs of Sydney and of the wider Australian community. It may destroy important parts of Sydney's heritage, as projects such as the Woolloomooloo redesign did a few decades earlier.

The RWA-plan could cause more pollution to Sydney and could require more cars and energy to be imported. The jobs and accommodation that are discussed seem to be tailored towards the needs and skills of newly arrived immigrants. Social engineering aspects of the RWA-plan provide little assistance where it is most required. In particular, public housing is under threat.

There is almost no planning detail that shows the cost of the project or the projected benefits. Timelines are not included and subsequent phases are referred to in vague terms. Local businesses, already under pressure from Parramatta Road style parking restrictions, may find it even more difficult to compete as multinational companies are enticed into

the area. In short, the RWA-plan seems to be another great Aussie disaster, as our resource rich economy lags even further behind economies that have virtually no resources whatever.

There are many things that can be improved in Redfern Waterloo and in all other Sydney Suburbs. This plan does not even have activities to see what the real requirements are. It has not done sufficient cost and benefit analysis and should be shelved before it does any further damage.

Alternatively, the RWA-plan could adopt some positive strategies to assist Aussie families to raise their children in a difficult urban environment. As an example, culturally sensitive Early Childhood Centres could be of enormous benefit to Koorie parents who are raising Australia's next generation of leaders.

1. Negative Economic Impact

Australia has a small population with vast resources. We used to be very wealthy but now we have a massive trade deficit that has more than doubled in the last decade. I believe the RWA proposal will be one more nail in Australia's economic coffin.

We cannot rip our resources out of the ground quickly enough to pay for the trinkets we are required to import under current trading agreements. The RWA-plan indicates that more vehicles will travel on Sydney's crowded roads. Importing these vehicles and the fuel to drive them will reflect poorly in Australia's projected current account deficit figures. Extra materials and skills will also be imported during the RWA's construction phases.

Newspaper articles imply that the RWA-proposal will benefit Australia's economy. It is likely that decreasing travel time from the Airport to Redfern and the CBD will increase imports and do nothing for exports - a financial disaster like so many of Australia's ill conceived plans.

2. Planning

There is no adequate funding schema or time frame for whole RWA-concept in the RWA-plan. Canberra has provided some direct and indirect funding and may provide more in the future. Federal, State and Local Administrations signed off on the project. It would appear that media articles such as "Not a black face in Redfern" were sufficient to convince Federal and State representatives of the merits of the RWA plan.

Several phases are mentioned in the RWA-plan. They are not detailed and the public has little information about them. There is no reference to an overall master plan that shows what will happen, where it will happen and when it will happen.

For example, the BEP contains an artist's impression of a paved walk-path from Redfern Station towards the Post Office. Looking at it, one can only assume that the traffic which currently exists, together with the new traffic, will be on a flyover and this would be consistent with the powers that Sator has. State Administrations are desperate to find new and expensive traffic projects to spend their GST and gambling revenue on. If these taxes are not spent, the States would lose their money for the subsequent year's budget. The concept of saving is totally foreign to the way Australia has been administered over the past 200 years, especially at federal level.

It should not be possible to even start community consultation with plans as flawed and skimpy as those the RWA has published.

3. Aboriginal Human Rights

While the BEP refers to The Block as a geographic location, it appears to have little concern for the Aboriginal people who live there. Nobody has made much effort to discuss the RWA-plan with Redfern's Aboriginal communities.

Newspaper articles refer to the removal of all Aboriginals from Redfern. Aboriginal people say that they will be dispersed to Sydney's outer suburbs. We call this ethnic cleansing when other countries do it. Howard was elected initially on policies that are detrimental to Australia's Indigenous population and it seems that the RWA is preparing to make an important contribution towards his plans.

A professional plan would contain alternatives to its main strategies. While the Pemulwuy project is a concept that has some support from Redfern's Aboriginal communities, it is not mentioned in the RWA-plan. Even the Pemulwuy project does not indicate which Aboriginal families would be allowed to live on The Block.

Redfern's Aboriginal residents seem to prefer their current status quo to either of the two alternatives that are being proposed. Even if Redfern's Koories were to achieve a satisfactory outcome from the RWA-plan, they are being put under a lot of stress by the rumors that are circulating in the Australian media.

All Australia is sacred under Aboriginal lore. The Block is especially sacred, representing the place when many battles have been fought for Indigenous rights. Building a commercial enterprise on The Block would be as sacrilegious to many Australians as the building of a supermarket on the site of one of Sydney's main cathedrals, mosques or synagogues would be.

Australia needs to be cautious in wantonly destroying the Human Rights of the world's most ancient and civilized culture if we want to be accepted as part of the world community.

4. Heritage Preservation

The RWA-plan spells out in detail that it would protect the heritage of the Redfern Waterloo area. Permission would be required before even a tree could be removed.

Should The Block be destroyed, an icon of tremendous value to Australia and the world would be destroyed. If The Block and other Aboriginal infrastructure were destroyed, then the statements in the RWA-plan about heritage preservation would be as meaningless as its sections about the economy.

No country or continent has destroyed as much that has such great heritage value for the world as Australia has in the last 200 years. By comparison, Africa and South America with their large populations have done marvelously well in preserving their culture, environment and economy.

5. Drugs and Crime

Newspaper articles refer to the drugs problem in The Block when elections loom. Very wealthy people import drugs into Redfern, under the gaze of a massive police presence. The location of the Redfern police station has changed a few times in recent years and the size of the police force has increased.

The availability of drugs on The Block has not altered. Indeed, when local residents requested that the needle exchange van be removed from their area, authorities were resolute that it should stay. Reports in the NSW Parliament indicate the people from the van were handing out needles by the handful. This small event shows how powerless local residents will be once the RWA assumes full authority.

International and national experience indicates that the drug-problem will be much more severe when Redfern becomes another transport interchange like Bondi Junction. The RWA's suggestion that "more eyes will reduce the drug traffic" is neither logical nor credible.

Australian and international experience indicates that repressive jailing systems do little to reduce long-term crime trends, especially when people are starving. The policy of jailing most Aboriginal people in NSW strips them of the ability to get a job or to plan their life, family or education.

Australia's jailing policy has been particularly repressive since the year 2000. Australia's jails are a source of disease such as HepC and they contribute to Aboriginal Australia's poor health statistics. The combination of imported drugs and a repressive jailing system is responsible for much of the dysfunction that Aboriginal Communities such as The Block experience from time to time.

Under humane policies, the internationally observed experiment on The Block should be a grand success when compared with other Australian initiatives of a similar nature. Given boldness and vision by Australia's leaders, The Block can once again become a symbol of hope to a world that is engulfed in greed and despair.

6. Pollution and Energy Requirements

Pollution in Redfern will almost certainly worsen under the RWA-plan as estimates show that an extra 40,000 to 50,000 vehicles per day will be added to traffic during peak hours. International statistics show that high-rise buildings require more energy and produce more pollution than smaller buildings do.

Australia imports much of our energy needs. We should be looking at ways to reduce energy consumption and the production of greenhouse gasses. The RWA-plan seems destined to make these problems worse. The RWA has a glorious opportunity to improve Australia's environmental record.

7. Public Housing

Public Housing is under threat in several Australian States, as the Canberra administration tries to encourage Australia's poorest communities to buy their own houses in a very expensive housing market. Indeed Costello recently said that expensive houses are good for Australia's exports, although no one understands this statement.

A meeting at the NSW Parliament in 2005 agreed that Sydney needs a Redfern with affordable housing and a skilled workforce, not another Chatswood or Bondi Junction. Sydney needs people who have certain skills to live close to the CBD in houses that are affordable. The RWA-plan does not indicate where current Redfern Waterloo workers should live.

Australia's present housing policy seems to be that people will remain in a given public housing unit but new tenants will be directed elsewhere. I attended three information sessions in the RWA tower, receiving little information to augment the published material. The RWA reps were particularly unhelpful when they were asked about NSW's Public Housing Policy. They indicated that a large number of people are waiting to get into public housing, but they failed to even provide me with the promised contact details of people who may be more expert in this area.

Redfern residents assure me that many public houses have available units and that little effort is made to fill them. Sydney needs a Redfern as it used to operate – the RWA has a glorious opportunity to fix the current public housing problems.

8. Community Needs : Early Childhood Centres

Communities in Redfern are not as wealthy, as well educated or as highly qualified as most other Australian communities. The RWA-plan refers to some problems and lists some of the demographics of the Redfern Waterloo area. It does not provide a detailed analysis of these problems nor does it show how the RWA-plan will alleviate them.

The RWA-plan mentions that unmarried mothers in the area find it difficult to cope. It mentions that a significant proportion of residents are from overseas countries and that they are no longer in the bloom of youth. It mentions that Aboriginal communities tend to have younger populations and that these youth need more education and training.

The RWA-plan does not provide any resolution of the problems that different groups in the Redfern Waterloo area may face. NSW does not do enough to help families to care for and educate their children, so we import youngsters from overseas to our eternal shame.

The RWA has the power to introduce facilities that are really needed into the Redfern Waterloo area. Certainly the construction of culturally sensitive Early Childhood Centres would be welcomed by Koorie families who are struggling to raise Australia's next generation of leaders in a dangerous urban environment that is rife with legal and illegal drugs.

9. Jobs

The RWA-plan indicates that many new jobs will be created. The types of jobs that will be created do not match the skills of the current workforce in the Redfern Waterloo area. There is little mention of any particular training that will be given.

The RWA-plan indicates that more jobs will be available at universities and in local computing centers. The future of the universities depends, to an extent, on the international market and this is unpredictable. VisLab used to be an excellent computing facility in Redfern's Technology Park but it closed down due to lack of interest. There is no guarantee that the promised jobs will eventuate.

Should jobs be created under the RWA-plan, it is likely that skilled migrants will be brought into the area. The RWA-plan's job and housing scheme seems to be oriented towards employing skilled migrants instead of training Australia's youth.

The RWA information sessions indicate that several Aboriginal people are being employed during the project's construction phase. It is uncertain what they would do once the construction phase has been completed.

The RWA plans to bring new workers into the Tower building. RWA-staff, at the information centers, could not tell me that the RWA does and will meet NSW legislation by employing the specified ratio of Aboriginal workers. Let the RWA lead by example and provide permanent positions that develop the workplace skills of Koories in the Redfern Waterloo area.

10. Summary

The RWA-proposal is currently guilty of the six social sins that Gandhi described several decades ago. These include "Politics without Principle", "Wealth without Work" and "Science without Humanity". The two party divided-and-conquered system that has been imposed on us fails us totally in an economic and humanitarian sense as politicians appeal to people's basest instincts to win elections.

The RWA-plan has no features that recommend it to the broader Australian community. A small number of people will profit as house prices increase and some temporary employment will be created during the construction phase. In the longer term, all features of the RWA-plan are negative.

The consequences of the current RWA-plan for Australia can be quite severe indeed. It lacks ethics and should be scrapped in its entirety.

It is time for Australia to adopt a more mature and intelligent way of providing social services for all Australian people in ways that reflect their legitimate cultural and economic needs. The RWA has the power and the resources to make a significant positive contribution to Australia's future. All Australians must hope that the RWA will act with courage and vision to grasp the real and valuable opportunities that are so easily obtainable.

Yours Sincerely

David Allen