

Robert Dom
CEO, Redfern-Waterloo Authority
PO Box 3332
Redfern NSW 2016

13 April 2006

Dear Sir,

RESPONSE TO THE DRAFT REDFERN-WATERLOO BUILT ENVIRONMENT PLAN (STAGE ONE)

1. Introduction

Redfern Legal Centre delivers key services to the local community including tenancy, domestic violence, credit and debt, and general legal services. It is an independent non-profit community managed organisation. It is a highly respected leader in the community services sector with a reputation established over 25 years. Redfern Legal Centre is also proud to host the Aboriginal Community Justice Group. This group will be making its own submission – which is supported by Redfern Legal Centre.¹

Redfern Legal Centre represents the community sector on the Human Services Ministerial Advisory Committee of the Redfern-Waterloo Authority. This submission, however, represents only the views of Redfern Legal Centre. For the views of the sector we would refer the Authority to the submission of the Inner Sydney Regional Council for Social Development on behalf of the (proto) South Sydney Consortium, to which we have contributed.

Redfern Legal Centre is also represented on the Community Safety Committee of Sydney City Council. We appreciate the benefit of the briefing provided to that Committee by the Authority in the preparation of this response.

It is through our daily engagement with crime, justice and community development practice and our work with the Community Safety Committee² that we inform this submission. We do not claim to any expertise in planning matters as such, nor will we take this to be an opportunity to comment on the role and

¹ As a matter of policy Redfern Legal Centre does not speak on behalf of Aboriginal people. Support is provided if requested.

² Redfern Legal Centre is currently funded by Sydney City Council pursuant to the Community Safety Plan to work with residents of public housing in Waterloo to enhance community safety.

73 Pitt St	Phone (02) 9698 7277	General enquiries	Interviews by
Redfern	Fax (02) 9310 3586	Monday to Thursday	appointment
NSW	TTY (02) 9699 8037	9 am-9 pm	Monday to Thursday
2016	http://www.rlc.org.au	Friday 9 am-5 pm	6:30pm-8:00pm

structure of the Authority in relation to the rights of local residents to meaningful participation in development matters, nor the acquisition and dispossession methods employed in relation to publicly owned infrastructure. This silence should not be taken to imply acquiescence.

There is one issue of particular concern, however, which can not pass un-noted. The Aboriginal Housing Company is the only non-Government land-holder covered by this Plan that is treated with significant disrespect for its aspirations. We protest this apparent race discrimination.

2. Planning for safety

The principles that should underline planning for the built environment should incorporate as core values planning for the creation and maintenance of safe public spaces.³ Such an aim would also be consistent with the objectives set out in the Human Services Plan.

At overview there is little apparent alignment between the Plan for the Built Environment and the Human Services Plan – and to the extent that the Human Services Plan adopts objectives such as precinct-based and one-stop-shop service delivery it is difficult to understand how the Built Environment Plan might have had any regard to those matters.

RECOMMENDATION ONE: That a matrix be provided to show the connection of the Human Service and Built Environment Plans.
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3. Comment on the Draft Built Environment Plan

3.1 General

It is recognised in this submission (although perhaps not apparent to viewers of the Plan itself) that the Authority is not in fact planning for the whole area or even for its most significant parts but rather for the eight ‘strategic sites’ within the district that it has control over. Of those sites the Authority appears to have little meaningful control of the railway station and Gibbons Street area, questionable authority over ‘Eveleigh St’ (the Block) which leaves it as essentially the government’s real estate agent for the sale of the school, the hospital, and the court house and as the rental agent for the ATP.

The plan is unclear about the status of its intentions with regard to the Redfern Station area, and also it appears to have no engagement with planning for roads. This community is afflicted by being dissected by a number of major roads the

³ See Appendix A

effect of which is significant to the safety and access to services of the local community.

RECOMMENDATION 2: That advice from the State Rail Authority and the Roads and Traffic Authority on this plan be sought and made publicly available for public comment prior to the finalisation of this plan.

3.2 Safe Places in the Redfern Station Area

The Plan provides for very small public areas both on the eastern and northern (The Block) side of the railway station. The Plan allows for very tall buildings around this area. This area is already known to be unsafe and for pedestrians exiting the railway station towards the East it is already subject to both a wind tunnel experience and the effect of very fast through traffic on the road. These small areas in highly uncomfortable environments are likely to discourage any positive community use of the space and may become havens for muggers. They are not at all likely to become the pictures of comfortable outdoor living depicted in the draft document.

RECOMMENDATION 3 : That wind tunnel effects and traffic volume measurements be undertaken for the Redfern Station area and that these investigations be made publicly available prior to the finalisation of the Plan

3.3 Safe tunnels and walkways

The draft Plan provides for a potential pedestrian and cycle bridge (North Eveleigh). Who would be likely to use this at what times and at what volumes? From a safety perspective it seems relevant to suggest that this might be an ideal spot for a robbery. It is not clear from the draft what width (significant if one needs to get away) what lighting or surveillance, or whether any consideration has been given to the 'London Bridge' model where it is actually broad enough to be its own retail area with the associated benefits of volume and surveillance. A tunnel is also problematic from a safety perspective. The tunnel appears to go from the Technology Park to nowhere in particular, except it happens to be close to Sydney University. It appears that this might provide parking for Sydney University (which is in the process of decreasing its on-campus parking)

A designated vehicle route may also be accessed by those on foot and by those with criminal intent. The Technology Park is under-utilised despite being the recipient of significant previous efforts of the state-as-real-estate-agent so it seems reasonable to ask what community safety considerations are being built into its development.

RECOMMENDATION 4: That usage and community safety surveys be undertaken and the results be made public prior to the finalisation of the Plan concerning tunnels and walkways
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3.4 Provision for public spaces

The Plan has ample opportunity to provide for some publicly accessible space in Redfern as a result of its control over the dispossession of all of the properties it covers including the public school, the hospital and the court house. It is noted that the only one with a requirement to do so is the Block.

From a community safety perspective we would urge further consideration not only of more and enhanced outdoor public spaces but also consideration of the community safety aspects of proposed developments.

For example if it is proposed that the Redfern School site be used for an elite athletes program how will the children who today use that open space to kick the footy be compensated? We understand that the current plan does not include public access to the former school oval area – which is currently unfenced and therefore available.

3.5 Planning for public services

We note that planning for the future of the Rachel Foster Hospital site does not require (although it ‘allows for’) any public purpose. Many members of the communities we serve remember their fundraising for that hospital – many others recognise its iconic status as the first that allowed and supported women in medical practice. To sell it off for housing on a commercial basis is a profound disrespect to all those communities.

A cross-reference to the human services plan would show the need for appropriate facilities in the area for drug and alcohol and elder care. Surely there is a more appropriate outcome than this?

From other evidence we understand that it is anticipated that there will be an increase in the population for the area. It seems relevant to question the removal of facilities such as schools and hospitals in this context.

The Authority is aware of our concerns about the closure of Redfern Local Court. From a planning perspective we take this opportunity to draw to attention the fact that if there are difficulties in the CBD concerning access to Government facilities it is surely efficient to outsource to venues that are in walking distance and/or well served by public transport and can fulfil development objectives?

From a safety perspective the closure of Redfern Local Court deprives the community of a significant symbol and focus for peace and good order. It deprives the local community of the facilities to take responsibility for

governance of their own affairs. Sending local matters to the large central court complex at Downing Centre is alienating, prevents the unique circumstances of Redfern-Waterloo from being taken into account, and ultimately is not likely to further the aim of improving community safety and amenity. Chronically alienated offenders are more likely to re-offend than those who can be dealt with in a manner that is appropriate to their rehabilitation needs and is constructed in a meaningful community context.

RECOMMENDATION 5: That Redfern Local Court be retained in public ownership and used for a purpose that promotes justice and safety.

Overall it is not clear from the document how this plan for eight distinct and separate sites might relate to the general SEPP for this area or the Metropolitan Strategy for Sydney. The treatment of major transport corridors, the development of Green Square and the airport precinct and the approach to the preservation of heritage and open spaces do not appear to have been considered in relation to this plan. To enable a more meaningful public consultation process the Authority should provide this contextual information.

Yours sincerely

REDFERN LEGAL CENTRE

Helen Campbell
Executive Officer

Appendix A:

An approach to planning for safety:

A: How do people use public spaces

- A:1 For transport
 - Walking, cycling
 - Public Transport – buses, trains, taxis, community
 - Disability and child perambulatory vehicles
 - Private cars and motor bikes
 - Delivery and industrial vehicles
 - Parking and pick-up points for most of the above

- A:2 For access to services
 - Shopping
 - Petrol stations
 - Schools and colleges
 - Hospitals and medical services
 - Government agencies such as Centrelink
 - Police, courts, legal services

- A:3 For recreation
 - “Civic” spaces – town squares
 - Parks – including pet-friendly spaces
 - Sporting areas
 - Shopping malls
 - Railway station precincts and bus interchanges
 - Areas around public buildings eg around a town hall
 - Areas around other entertainment venues eg movie venues
 - Unacknowledged activities eg drug use, prostitution, gambling

B: When do people use public spaces

- B:1 Time of day/Day of week
 - Commuters
 - School children
 - Shoppers
 - Entertainment service users
 - Homeless persons

- B:2 Time/date of year
 - Local festivals
 - Traditional events of religious significance

Major events eg music concerts/sporting fixtures
anniversaries Extraordinary events
Funerals of great community interest
Rallies and demonstrations
Outbreaks of community unrest

C: What makes using public spaces safe?

- C:1 Volume
More people in busy places over most of the time is preferable to smaller, occasionally used or disused spaces
- C:2 Multi-purpose use
Spaces that are used simultaneously or sequentially for various uses are safer than single purpose/time/event spaces
- C:3 Surveillance
Active policing of busy places makes them more safe
Community 'ownership' of smaller or quieter places provides effective surveillance if there are positive established relationships with local law enforcement agencies (this includes police, security guards at shopping malls and elsewhere, and railway staff)
- C:4 Lighting and visibility
Reliable and effective lighting of public spaces
Avoidance of shrubbery and other 'lurking spots'
- C:5 Available local community services
Known safe available non-judgemental services
Funded provision of evening and weekend youth services
- C:6 Established and trusted relationships
Community leaders and security authorities understand, respect and work together to deal with the various uses of public spaces
- C:7 Civic pride
Public spaces that are properly and regularly maintained – garbage, graffiti, glass and needles removed, grass mown, lights working etc
Community involvement in establishment and maintenance of places of significance – local history acknowledged and supported, Aboriginal heritage publicly recognised, community gardens supported, provision for pets.
- C:8 Development respect
When road works or building development is taking place neighbours are consulted, warned, and inconvenienced. That work is not unduly noisy, intrusive of access, or conducted without proper explanation or advice about duration.