

**REDFERN RESIDENTS FOR RECONCILIATION**  
**c/o Redfern Community Centre, Hugo Street, REDFERN NSW 2016**

Mr Robert Domm  
CEO  
Redfern Waterloo Authority,  
Level 11

19 April 2006

Dear Mr Domm,

Redfern Residents for Reconciliation (RRR) has been meeting with members of the Aboriginal community in Redfern for about 10 years. Most of us live in the area, so we daily experience the contribution of the Aboriginal community to our area and have been very aware of the great diversity within the Aboriginal communities of Redfern & Waterloo.

During the 1990s we lobbied hard to ensure that the then South Sydney Council undertook to engage with the community living on the Block when decisions about what would happen to the site now occupied by the Redfern Community Centre were made. The decision of the council at that time has made a major impact on turning around the some of the divisions that existed between members of the Aboriginal & non-Aboriginal communities by allowing a place of interaction on the Block. The Redfern Waterloo Authority and state government have the opportunity to make a similarly pivotal decision in support of reconciliation in Redfern, by allowing the Pemulwuy project, including the Gadigal apartments, to proceed.

In considering our submission it is important to understand that during the 1990s, when the Aboriginal Housing Company (AHC) began to demolish rundown housing on the Block, RRR supported members of the Aboriginal community who were opposing the AHC's decision to demolish housing. It has always been important to RRR that local Aboriginal residents' housing needs are given more importance than purely economic considerations. Given this history it is a considerable change of position for some members of our group to come out in support of the AHC.

The change in RRR's position has come about as we have observed the careful social planning that has gone into the Pemulwuy Project and the importance placed by the AHC on their primary objective which is to provide housing on land that was purchased with a grant given by the Whitlam Labor Government, specifically for housing.

As part of the wider reconciliation network of both NSW & Australia we are also very aware of the deep attachment to the Block by Aboriginal people throughout Australia. The "Eveleigh Precinct" has been declared state significant under the control of the RWA, but as the Block was the first urban land to be given back to Aboriginal people, the Block's return to Aboriginal ownership is a focal point for Aboriginal history. It is far more than just state significant, it is of national significance to all Australians

concerned with reconciliation and the Aboriginal struggle for land, justice, coexistence and recognition. At the NSW Reconciliation Council AGM held last October in Redfern, many participants from around the state expressed the view that if the NSW government, through the Redfern Waterloo Authority, could not get reconciliation right in Redfern, they would not be able to get it right anywhere.

Much of the publicity surrounding the draft Redfern-Waterloo Built Environment Plan has focused on the employment opportunities that will be provided close to the station. While few of the office blocks proposed along Gibbons St are likely to provide employment opportunities for the local Aboriginal population, the Pemulwuy project includes provision for employment, education and training opportunities for Aboriginal people.

The Pemulwuy project incorporates all the stated aims of the Land Use Strategy of the draft Redfern Waterloo Built Environment Plan as it provides a *'concentration of activity and development density around the Redfern Railway Station'*.

It includes gallery space and an area for markets selling Aboriginal produced art and crafts from the community, the Tribal Warrior office which provides Aboriginal harbour tours, as well as space for people to watch performances by Aboriginal actors, dancers and musicians.

Unlike the office towers proposed in the draft Redfern Waterloo BEP, the Pemulwuy project provides practical outcomes for Aboriginal people that will help shape the future of this suburb and this city in an inclusive way and enhance the standing of the state government when it drops its opposition to the residential component of the AHC's development.

RRR is committed to a vision of Redfern that may include a Museum of Aboriginal History, but without a residential component to the development on the Block, Redfern will only be a cultural museum not a living community. The state government, through the Redfern Waterloo Authority, must ensure that Aboriginal people continue to have a residential presence on the Block and that Aboriginal people are not forced off their land yet again.

Signed on behalf of Redfern Residents for Reconciliation  
by

Deborah Wall  
Conveners

Lyn Turnbull