

To The Hon Frank Sartor
Minister for Planning
Minister for Redfern Waterloo
Minister for Science and Medical Research
Minister Assisting the Minister for Health (Cancer)
Redfern-Waterloo Authority
PO Box 3332
Redfern NSW 2016

Redfern 2016

31st March 2006

Dear Mr Sartor

I have been a resident owner at the above address since May 1978. I'm a retired librarian, and in 1982 I did the literature search for the team from Newcastle University who were commissioned by the NSW Department of Aboriginal Affairs to do "a benchmark survey of Aboriginal people's perceptions of their basic needs" in preparation for the passing of land rights legislation in this state. After the reports from select committees of the Legislative Assembly in 1980 and 1981, the thinking seemed to be that the psychological boost that a generous grant of land rights would give, would change the lives of Aboriginal people, and a follow-up survey was to be done after ten years, to measure the positive difference.

The very day the land rights legislation was passed, another bill was passed to prevent any claim on former reserve lands, the very lands that were so significant for Aboriginal people. There was no generosity, no psychological boost, and the ten year follow-up survey was never done.

Since then so much has been **said** about the centrality of reconciliation in building a decent and harmonious future for our country, but opportunities to **act** for real change have been missed again and again. We know that until we achieve real justice and equality for all the descendents of the original owners of this land, we are a flawed and morally crippled nation.

As the Draft Redfern-Waterloo Built Environment Plan (Stage One) February 2006 notes in section 2.4, Redfern has always been "**a centre of major significance to Aboriginal people who have a strong association with the area and contribute to its strong sense of identity. The Block is particularly important as a**

meeting place for local Aboriginal people, as well as visitors from outside the area.”

It was the Whitlam government's actions in 1972 which made possible the acquisition of The Block, and set up the Aboriginal Housing Company. Keating's landmark Redfern Park statement in 1992 was a proud moment both for Aboriginal people and for all Australians who long for justice in this land. There is no need to remind you that both Whitlam and Keating were Labor men.

It seems unthinkable that your Labor government would want to undo those two important and immensely significant initiatives by making it impossible for the Pemulwuy Project to be built on the Aboriginal Housing Company land. Why would you want to break with a proud Labor tradition? Why would you not act for reconciliation, seize this opportunity to reverse the cycle of Aboriginal disadvantage, and let the Pemulwuy project proceed? It surely cannot be that you would act on a racial stereotyping prejudice that says because there have been problems in the past, caused by inadequate housing and employment opportunities, Aboriginal people cannot create a residential/commercial/cultural precinct that can be a source of pride for **all** of us? What the draft plan calls the Eveleigh Street RWA Strategic Site, is in large part the land set aside for Aboriginal **housing** and your rezoning of it to prevent the building of the Pemulwuy project is not acceptable. If your developers think the presence of Aboriginal people is a hindrance to investment, they obviously do not want to be in Redfern. Let them take their development somewhere else!

As well as misjudging community attitudes towards the presence of our Indigenous brothers and sisters, you seem to have disregarded many other values supported in this community.

1. Your draft plan shows no attempt to solve the terrible traffic problems in our area, and increasing traffic by grossly inflating floor space ratios will only exacerbate the problem. The future role of Redfern Station as part of an integrated traffic and transport node is not dealt with, and transport across and within the area has not been addressed. These basic services must be in place before you increase the number of people who will need to use them, or even begin construction of the buildings they will use. You risk creating a nightmare for motorists, cyclists and pedestrians.
2. You speak of job creation, but the office towers you seek to have built, if they are ever occupied (when already there is so much vacant office space in the CBD), will not have jobs

suitable for the present residents of the area. Where are the light industry and small business opportunities we need?

3. We already have the lowest ratio of green space of any suburb, yet green space in Marion Street and around Redfern School is marked for multi-storey development. The street trees in the artist's impressions will not grow in the shady wind-tunnel canyons being proposed. How are all these people you propose to house and employ in the area going to breathe?
4. If so many more people are to come, (and if they want to join our community we will welcome them!) where will their children go to school? If you wait to see the need and then try to buy a school site, it will be too late. Why not keep the Redfern School site?
5. There is already a need for better aged care facilities in the area. Why sell off the Rachel Forster site?

Surely the answer to all my questions is not that the government is interested only in getting maximum return on the sale of state-owned land in the area, and driving through a programme of profit-driven development without supporting infrastructure and community facilities?! Surely this is not a plan to gentrify this area of desirable inner-city real estate, and drive its people-of-no-account out to the fringes?! Please convince me it isn't so!

Yours faithfully

Gabrielle Smith