

St Vincent's Catholic Church Community
c/- 63 Caroline St
Redfern 2016

10/4/06

Submission to the Redfern-Waterloo Authority

We write in response to the invitation to forward submissions to the Redfern-Waterloo Authority concerning the Draft Redfern-Waterloo Built Environment Plan (Stage One) (hereafter referred to as the Draft Plan). As people who attend St Vincent's Catholic Church, Redfern, we have an interest in the area. Some of us are directly involved in various ways locally. Our perspective is out of particular concern for the urban Aboriginal population and the ways in which these proposed changes affect that population.

Thank you for the local forums and gatherings that have enabled us to understand the Draft Plan better, and for the opportunity to present submissions.

We note that over the coming years a large increase in population is expected yet, without any consultation with the local people, basic infrastructure that would meet the needs of this expanding population are being dismantled. For example, in spite of a desperate need for high quality education, Redfern Public School is being sold. Similarly, both the former Rachel Forster Hospital and the Court House are zoned for other uses. We would expect that with an increase in population these important assets would be retained.

With the increase in residential and job-related populations there will be more traffic and congestion on the roads. For those using rail transport, Redfern Station will become even more congested at peak times. How will the existing transport systems cope?

The heavy traffic in the area, especially along the Regent St/Botany Rd artery brings pollution. Yet the green spaces in the area are miserably inadequate—already less than in other parts of Sydney. At the very least those that exist should be preserved and improved for the physical and psychological health of residents.

We are aware that multi-storey office buildings in the city are not in full use and yet the Draft Plan shows a considerable increase in commercial buildings planned for Redfern-Waterloo. The kinds of jobs in such places are not what many local unemployed people look for. We question the extent of zoning for such buildings.

Of particular interest to us in the Draft Plan is the small piece of land known as The Block, a site of local, metropolitan and national significance. The Block was given to the Aboriginal community by the Whitlam government in 1973. It desperately needs a

critical mass of housing for a decent and viable Aboriginal community to thrive. Residents, relatives and friends from the Block form part of our community. The St Vincent's community holds the view that development of this area should be according to the needs and aspirations of the existing residents whose social, economic and development plan, known as the Pemulwuy Project, has won at least one international award. Peter Valilis, a member of the Pemulwuy team, stated in a letter to the *SMH* that “the AHC [Aboriginal Housing Company] worked hand in glove with the NSW Premier’s Department on perfecting the social and urban planning” for that project. The Pemulwuy Project caters for a viable Aboriginal community along with various commercial, educational and cultural initiatives. The St Vincent's community regards the rejection of the Pemulwuy Project as nothing less than a modern version of colonisation.

There is much government-held land around the railways which is ripe for development. But developers and investors should not be the only beneficiaries. There is no reason why a desire for profit and gentrification must come at the expense of the needs of the existing Aboriginal and other low-income communities. By fostering appropriate and sustainable developments along the rail lands *AND* encouraging the development of the Pemulwuy Project, the RWA could pioneer urban design that co-addresses the needs of Indigenous, existing and new residents.

We trust that our response will contribute to amendments that will balance economic considerations with the needs and aspirations of the local community.