

Chapter Three – Community Strengthening Activities

“Community Safety is about respect for each other to build community”.

- 78 Year old Waterloo resident

3.1 Introduction

A key factor in determining how safe people feel is the types of relationships people share with one another at the neighbourhood level. In communities where people interact on a regular basis the impression is created that people look out for another and hence feel safer. This will also make an outsider with criminal intentions that much more conspicuous in that kind of community. The opposite occurs where people have few neighbourhood relationships and put bars on their windows and high walls around their properties and thereby cut themselves off from the people in their immediate environment. This “fortress mentality” can create the impression that an area is perhaps more unsafe than it is in reality. How perceptions and realities work to influence each other may well determine people’s reactions to crime.

The media may also play an important role in determining how safe people feel generally, or in a particular area.

3.2 Social Capital

There is increasing evidence emerging of the importance of support networks for people that are engendered by community relationships – often called social capital. This has produced new interest in policies of neighbourhood renewal and community development both here and overseas. Areas with a high social capital are characterised by a strong sense of community, management of issues for the common good, high levels of involvement, optimism in the future, personal action and advocacy. Such debates are seen to be important when thinking about the contribution of strong and safe communities to stable and healthy families and the ability of government policy to nurture such communities.

A recent study of 1,000 people in Eurobodalla Shire in southern New South Wales found that the happiest people are those who take an interest in the world and participate in their community. The study found that in general the more people participate, the better their mental health.

The researcher said:

*“People who join things have a sense of belonging, of being a valued member of a group. Belonging engenders trust and trust engenders an optimistic outlook. It is this optimism that is directly predictive of good mental health. People who have hope for the future have a powerful shield against the slings and arrows of outrageous fortune”.*¹

¹ Berry H. (2003) Doctoral thesis, Mental Health Research Centre, Australian National University



The Redfern Community Centre a Council funded new base for community strengthening activities in the area

3.3 Redfern-Waterloo Partnership Project and Community Strengthening Activities

The Redfern-Waterloo Partnership Project are involved in a number of initiatives designed to build and strengthen the communities of Redfern and Waterloo namely:

Programs for Children and Young People

The Redfern-Waterloo Partnership Project has provided funding to Redfern Police Local Area Command to conduct a number of programs with local children and young people. The aim of these programs is to build rapport with local children, young people and their families. These activities include school holiday camps for Police and local young people, a mentoring program, a drug and alcohol education program and a sports mentoring program. In addition an after school sports program is provided to all school aged children in Redfern, Waterloo and Darlington at Alexandria Park Community School. The Street Team and other initiatives are covered in relevant sections of the plan.

Community Forums

A Community Council representing key community stakeholders is being formed and regular Community Forums will provide a mechanism where agencies will be invited to report to the wider community on general achievements. The Community Forums will also provide a mechanism for the wider community to report back on what they see as priority issues through the Community Engagement Framework. The Redfern-Waterloo Partnership Project will facilitate and manage the Community Engagement Framework which includes the Senior Officers Group and the Community Council.

The Redfern-Waterloo Partnership Project is currently receiving nominations for the Community Council and the first Community Forum will be held in September 2003.

3.4 South Sydney Council and Community Strengthening Activities

South Sydney Council has long been engaged in a broad range of community strengthening activities in the Redfern-Waterloo area. Some current local initiatives include the weekly Kidspeak program on Waterloo Green, Drivin' for Employment, Lights, Camera, Action, Rec'n' Redfern which includes Run Around The Block for children and young people, activity centres for seniors and people with disabilities, walking groups, Brackets and Jam a weekly performance at St. Saviours Church, the library service at Waterloo and the Save the Children Mobile Play Bus.

Many of these initiatives are implemented in partnership with a number of local community development organisations including Redfern Aboriginal Corporation, South Sydney Community Aid, Inner Sydney Regional Council For Social Development, Connect Redfern, the Factory Community Centre, the Department of Housing, PCYC, Fact Tree, The Settlement, South Sydney Youth Services and others.

One of the meetings of the Redfern-Waterloo Community Safety Taskforce explored the issue of ways of increasing social capital in Redfern and Waterloo. The intention was to explore strategies aimed at:

- Strengthening the community's sense of pride
- Managing whole of community solutions to community issues
- Increasing a sense of optimism in the future and the community's ability to influence it
- Increasing the willingness of people to intervene and co-operate for overall community benefit
- Increasing the sense of personal action, advocacy and constructive participation in community debate and
- Increasing the active use of public space and a high level of interaction between citizens.

Many of these issues were identified by the community during the consultation process and will form a major plank of the Community Facilities Plan which is currently being developed. Council is also in the process of developing the old Wilson Brothers site near The Block into a community centre. This is a significant initiative as it will provide a focal point for community connections and services in the area.

The following strategies have been developed with the aim of building and strengthening relationships in the Redfern and Waterloo areas, so as to produce a positive impact in terms of community safety.



Crowds gather at the opening of the new Redfern Community Centre in March 2004.

Strategy	Who
<p>3.0 Construct a new community centre on the old Wilson Brothers next to The Block to respond to the recreational and cultural needs of the people of Redfern and Waterloo and ensure that the centre is promoted in such a way as to maximise community use.</p>	<p>Council Redfern-Waterloo Partnership Project</p>
<p>3.1 Review the current funding arrangement for festivals in the Redfern-Waterloo area with the view of exploring ideas for Council and community involvement in a festival in the area (including Redfern-Waterloo festival, Redfern Tenants Information Day and Redfern Arts and Crafts festival).</p>	<p>Council and community organisations</p>



Crowds gather at the inaugural Redfern-Waterloo Festival in Redfern Park in October 2003.

Strategy	Who
<p>3.2 Ensure that any future festival proposal incorporates a strategy which provides evidence as to how the community will be involved in every stage of the event including planning, implementation and evaluation.</p>	<p>Council and community organisations</p>
<p>3.3 Conduct a feasibility study into holding open air cinema events in open spaces in the Redfern-Waterloo area through the Community Facilities Plan.</p>	<p>Council supported by the Redfern-Waterloo Partnership Project</p>
<p>3.4 Initiate where possible smaller community strengthening activities such as street parties and social events with and between public and private housing blocks.</p>	<p>DOH HCAP Worker UNSW CDP Relevant community organisations through Council's Small Grants Programs and other funding sources</p>
<p>3.5 Establish a program of live music in local parks such as Waterloo and Redfern Oval on Sunday afternoons to provide performance opportunities for local musicians and to encourage families to get to know each other in local parks – possibly give such events an underlying theme such as anti-drugs – this project could be an extension of the Brackets and Jam initiative, the weekly multicultural performance event at St Saviours, Redfern.</p>	<p>Council Relevant local community organisations</p>
<p>3.6 Develop and implement a policy providing Aboriginal Traineeship positions.</p>	<p>Council</p>
<p>3.7 Explore ways of improving attendance at precinct meetings in Redfern-Waterloo and ensure that community strengthening activities are a regular agenda item at meetings.</p>	<p>Precinct representatives in partnership with Department of Housing, Council and the community sector.</p>

Strategy	Who
<p>3.8 Continue to develop innovative consultation tools for ensuring that all sections of the community have input into future planning processes.</p>	<p>Council, Redfern-Waterloo Partnership Project and the community services sector.</p>

SOUTH SYDNEY CITY COUNCIL LOCAL GOVERNMENT AREA



A map of the former South Sydney Local Government Area featuring animated icons of major community landmarks used in many of the community consultations.

Strategy	Who
<p>3.9 Produce a Useful Numbers Card for residents in Redfern and Waterloo to encourage residents to take greater responsibility for issues affecting the community.</p>	<p>Council</p>
<p>3.10 Conduct community consultations with CALD communities to ensure that they have input into priority community issues.</p>	<p>Council, Department of Housing and the community sector.</p>
<p>3.11 Investigate developing a Welcome Kit to orient all new residents into public housing in Redfern and Waterloo.</p>	<p>Department of Housing</p>
<p>3.12 Develop a resource kit to orient all new workers to the Redfern-Waterloo area.</p>	<p>Relevant community organisations with assistance through Council's Annual Grants Program</p>
<p>3.13 Continue to run the Black Diamond Program to provide a weekly health and fitness program at The Block.</p>	<p>Council Mudgin-gal Aboriginal Women's Community Centre</p>
<p>3.14 Explore the links between Alexandria Park community school and the wider community as the basis for developing further community strengthening activities in the area.</p>	<p>Council, Children and Family Services sector</p>



Redfern Oval one of the few open spaces where families can gather together in the area

Strategy	Who
<p>3.15 Investigate putting engraver kits to protect personal property in Council libraries to be borrowed like books.</p>	<p>Council, Surry Hills, Redfern, Newtown Police</p>
<p>3.16 Investigate establishing individual websites for both suburbs where local residents and businesses could access information specific to either area eg community organisations, groups, activities and local services.</p>	<p>Council Redfern-Waterloo Project Manager</p>
<p>3.17 Under the Human Services Review investigate opportunities for additional tenancy support and information for public housing estate residents to provide assistance in relation to issues such as mental health, information and referral and community development initiatives in the area.</p>	<p>Department of Health, Community Services, HACC, FACs. Redfern Legal Centre</p>
<p>3.18 Investigate expanding the Waterloo Recycling Workshop into the space alongside the current workshop to further promote community interaction and reduce unsafe activities on the site.</p>	<p>Department of Housing</p>
<p>3.19 Under the Human Services Review investigate opportunities for funding for the ongoing support of Redwater News the main source of information about tenant issues and activities in public housing.</p>	<p>Department of Housing, Council, HCAP Worker through Council's small grants scheme and other funding sources.</p>