

REDWatch Overview: Why, How and What we Do

This guide has been prepared for REDWatch Members and for those thinking of becoming involved on the REDWatch Coordination Group or taking on Officer Positions in REDWatch Incorporated.

REDWatch is a bit different from many resident groups. This document seeks to provide an overview of REDWatch's activities and how they fit within the organisations objects.

REDWatch was formed in 2004 around a [REDWatch charter](#). When the group was incorporated in 2006, the charter was reflected into the REDWatch Incorporated's objects, which set out what the organisation was set up to do. You can find the articles of association and membership forms on the website under [REDWatch Incorporated & Membership](#).

Below in ***bold italic*** throughout the document you will find the wording from the REDWatch objects, which is then followed by a section on "How we have done it". We have highlighted the broader 'who we are and what we do' rather than the 'how' early in the objects.

REDWatch's Objects

REDWatch is a group of community residents and friends from Redfern, Waterloo, Eveleigh and Darlington who support the existing diversity in these areas and wish to promote sustainable, responsible economic and social development.

How we have done it: The articles of association allow anyone who lives or works in Redfern Eveleigh, Darlington and Waterloo (REDW) or immediately adjoining suburbs to be ordinary members of REDWatch. Outside this area people can be Associate Members.

REDWatch recognises the importance of the Aboriginal community to the area.

REDWatch has been formed to:

Monitor the activities of the Government (local, state and federal), the Redfern Waterloo Authority, and any other government instrumentality with responsibility for the Redfern, Waterloo, Darlington and Eveleigh area,

How we have done it: Historically we had state government "authorities" responsible for the area – from 2001-2006 the Redfern Waterloo Participation Project (RWPP); from 2004-2011 the Redfern Waterloo Authority (RWA); from 2010 – 2012 Sydney Metropolitan Development Authority (SMDA); and from 2013-2019 UrbanGrowth Development Corporation (UGDC). With the windup of UGDC in mid-2019 some aspects, like the contributions plans, went to Infrastructure NSW.

Subsequently individual Government organisations (e.g. Land and Housing Corporation (LAHC), Transport Assets Holding Entity (TAHE) & Transport for NSW (TfNSW)) have handled the implementation of plans for individual sites. REDWatch continues to watch those sites and take action as required.

On the Human Services side, the Waterloo Human Services Collaborative, which REDWatch helped set up through Groundswell, has taken over human services discussions with government originally started by the RWPP & RWA.

to ensure that:

(a) The strategy benefits a diverse community

How we have done it: We acknowledge that we live in a diverse community and continually request government to acknowledge that diversity and consult accordingly. For example we encourage government to talk to a variety of voices in the Aboriginal and wider communities recognising that community voices are sometimes in contradiction. In Waterloo there are public housing tenants who take opposing views on height and density, and whether redevelopment is a good thing or not. There is also a need to talk to a range of communities whose first language is not English and may have different views to other parts of the community.

(b) Communication and consultation is comprehensive and responsive

How we have done it: REDWatch is continually pushing government departments to properly engage with the community – one REDWatch's early actions was to develop [Community Participation Principles](#) in 2004.

Recently when the Department of Planning and Environment (DPE) took over the role of Council in consulting about Waterloo South, REDWatch was approached by DPE about how best to undertake that engagement. Following that meeting and referring them to the Waterloo Redevelopment Group and Groundswell, REDWatch continued to play an active role in pushing for appropriate engagement. REDWatch has also been vocal about DPE not listening to the community and not honouring its undertakings to Waterloo tenants in terms of feeding back what it heard and explaining why they had, or had not, acted on what tenants had raised in their submissions.

In another recent example, for the Large Erecting Shop rezoning exhibition, REDWatch realised that the community was not aware of the exhibition and negotiated an extension of time and publicity around the exhibition to get input. At North Eveleigh we have held forums to share information and encourage involvement and supported groups formed around the site.

(c) Pressure is maintained on authorities

How we have done it: REDWatch and its website keeps a record of what has gone before so that the earlier conversations, consultations and decisions can influence what Government proposes next. Agencies often tell us that they use the REDWatch web site to access material that is not readily accessible elsewhere, as do journalists, academics and residents. The history of the current cross Eveleigh Railyard bridge, long term campaigns on The Block, active heritage uses at the ATP, heritage interpretation and the saving of the LES building, all rely on ongoing pressure and making sure issues do not go away. This is particularly important in terms of follow up to DAs – the heritage outcomes achieved at South Eveleigh came through continual pushing rather than giving up after the DA exhibition stage.

2. Provide a mechanism for discussion and action on community issues.

How we have done it: Historically REDWatch monthly meetings have played a key role in exploring issues, capacity building and providing an avenue for community actions. Special public meeting events and rallies have also played a part as required.

3. Enhance communication between community groups and encourage broad community participation.

How we have done it: REDWatch uses its email supporters list to keep agencies, Council and Government workers all up to date with what is happening in the area so they can answer questions from clients or respond as they think fit. Our email lists also include those we are trying to influence so they know what REDWatch is concerned about.

These email updates grew out of the Redfern Waterloo Issue Updates Lyn and Geoff Turnbull produced prior to the setup of REDWatch. The RWIU continued for many years after REDWatch was

established to allow a level of “plausible deniability” for ALP members within REDWatch during a Labor government. Geoff now does them as REDWatch Co-Spokesperson with help from Lyn.

REDWatch’s main involvement with agencies and human service organisations is through Groundswell, which was established in 2011 when the RWA put out its plans for redeveloping all the area’s public housing. Groundswell was a common umbrella for NGOs to work together in Redfern Waterloo and a mechanism to protect funded agencies from Government pressure. (There is a section on Groundswell later in this document).

The mechanisms for working with other resident groups is through joint activities with surrounding resident groups like Alexandria Residents Action Group (ARAG) and Friends of Erskineville (FOE) around elections and campaigns like the build a bridge campaign.

More widely, in the LGA we participate in resident group meetings with Council and we are a member of the NSW Better Planning Network. In the mid-2000s REDWatch was a member of CityRAGs which brought together resident groups in the Local Government Area but conflicts between groups and personalities meant that CityRAGs ceased to exist. Post Covid some RAGs have come together around the reopening and services delivered by Council Community Centres.

This may involve:

Holding regular meetings;

How we have done it: REDWatch has monthly meetings open to the public and Coord Group meetings which are open to all members.

Monthly meetings give those who have an ongoing involvement a set time and place when they know REDWatch will be meeting. While there is usually a core group who attend, depending on the topic, the meetings may attract different additional people from meeting to meeting. The REDWatch meeting is a community controlled space, where we control the agenda, the questions and the commentary. It has been used to explore areas of community concern, to debate issues that government is working on, but does not want to publically discuss. We build understanding and community capacity around an issue and have a place to celebrate and have fun.

Working out the issues and how to facilitate monthly meetings takes up much of the Coord group’s time. Without it however we do not have the same ear to the ground and opportunities to have discussions on our own terms. We have been good at responding to the issues thrown up by Government players, but less so at our long term strategically planning.

Holding community forums and other events;

How we have done it: Community forums have happened during our regular meeting dates if the timing works or via special meetings e.g. North Eveleigh if the timing or location for the meeting needs to change. Where possible REDWatch prefers to host and chair briefings rather than government agencies having control. Sometimes we might need to have a couple of meetings in the month if an urgent issue drops. REDWatch has also hosted broader resident group meetings including for the Better Planning Network and our own candidate forums.

Establishing a website;

How we have done it: We have a well-respected website that has served us well since 2005, but it is in urgent need of an upgrade that allows us to keep the history while updating its capabilities. The website is a record of what has happened in the area around sites or issues of interest to REDWatch and is often the only public access point for documents that have disappeared from Government websites and disbanded entities.

The ability for REDWatch to make known what is happening and our comments are important in dealing with Government and the community. It allows REDWatch to post documents and guides

that we can then refer people to via social media and our emails. It also has made visible government documents, presentations and statements that would not be posted on Government websites.

Critical comments from REDWatch in an Update email, on the website or comments to the press are the things that Government dread and are part of the big stick we can brandish, if the quite conversations do not get the attention they deserve. REDWatch includes decision makers on our email list to ensure that they know about community concerns.

Communicating with the community through other means;

How we have done it: Email Updates, Facebook, Event Posters, Networking, Counterpoint Community Services Newsletter, South Sydney Herald articles and other media articles are ways in which we get the word out. REDWatch also does a lot of backgrounding of interested parties and journalists and referring of journalist to people who can make comments or provide expertise. It is often best for others to be directly quoted rather than REDWatch.

Most importantly REDWatch has to listen to the community so it knows what people are concerned about. REDWatch meetings are one source of this but so is being part of other groups like the Waterloo Redevelopment Group and Groundswell and attending functions where residents are involved. Attending forums like those put on by council and government bodies, Clover's public housing meetings and talking to NGO staff also provide opportunities to learn about community concerns.

Meeting with government representatives and authorities;

How we have done it: We identify key people, have meetings and correspondence with Government departmental representatives as required and participate in committees and forums.

Some of recent our interactions include:

- Department of Planning and Environment (DPE) over Waterloo Estate Planning proposal and exhibition as well as exhibitions of Development Applications and Planning Proposals like South Eveleigh, North Eveleigh and the Large Erecting Shop
- Transport for NSW (TfNSW) and the Transport Asset Holding Entity (TAHE) over Redfern Station Southern Concourse, connectivity around Redfern Station to buses, the development above the Eastern Suburbs Rail line at Redfern, North Eveleigh and Large Erecting Shop.
- Waterloo Human Services Plan Collaborative of NGO & ten Government Agencies (REDWatch is a member, and Geoff Turnbull Co-chair Service Integration and Systems Coordination Group and is involved in some implementation groups – see more details later in document).
- Land and Housing Corporation (LAHC) – through Waterloo Redevelopment Group, Groundswell and meetings with project staff.
- Department of Communities and Justice (DCJ) through Waterloo human services and Groundswell quarterly meetings with DCJ.
- Sydney Local Health District (SLHD) – through Waterloo human Services, Groundswell quarterly meetings with SLHD, Involvement on Steering Committee for the Health Equity Research Unit (HERDU), Equityfest, Health Impact Assessments (HIA) for Green Square and Waterloo
- City of Sydney – REDWatch deals both with Officers and Councillors as well as the Office of the Lord Mayor (OLM). REDWatch has a dedicated contact point in OLM, but also deals with Council staff as necessary on issues of concern. REDWatch attends Council forums for resident groups and as necessary writes to Councillors about areas of concern. Given that Council has been removed as the consent authority on many of the major sites in the REDW area REDWatch's interests often align with Council on some of the larger planning issues. (For more detail see Council section later in this document).

- Police – REDWatch attends the quarterly Community Safety Precinct Committee (CSPC) meetings
- Others – As required REDWatch also meets with other organisations such as Carriageworks and Sydney University as required.

Cooperating with other community organisations;

How we have done it: We participate in Groundswell and the Waterloo Redevelopment Group. We work with Friends of Erskineville (FOE) and the Alexandria Residents Action Group (ARAG), other City Resident Action Groups (RAGs), as well as heritage and rail groups. We are a member of the NSW Better Planning Network (BPN).

REDWatch has had a close relationship with Counterpoint Community Services over many years – we moved from Redfern Community Centre to avoid having to fundraise just to pay Council to meet there. Counterpoint allows REDWatch fee free use of the Factory Community Centre for our regular meetings and covers our insurance. Over the years there has been an overlap between Counterpoint and REDWatch members and Counterpoint reports REDWatch activities as part of community groups using its facilities. Counterpoint has also made available paid staff time from its own staff to support and facilitate REDWatch. For many years this was provided by Mike Shreenan as REDWatch Convenor and then by Adam Antonelli when he worked at Counterpoint. Until Adam’s replacement is appointed, Counterpoint cannot continue to provide REDWatch with paid staff time.

And any other means the association deems appropriate.

How we have done it: Participate where considered useful in discussions with developers undertaking developments in the area to try and influence better outcomes for our communities. Examples include participation on the Mirvac South Eveleigh Community Liaison Group and the South Eveleigh Advisory Panel, as well as meeting with developers and consultants.

REDWatch also briefs journalists, academics and residents about issues and links people with common interests or sources of information.

Other related issues (a bit too big to include above)

Groundswell & Human Services

How we have done it: REDWatch primarily works on human services aspects of Government involvement through REDWatch participation in Groundswell and REDWatch membership of the Waterloo Human Services Collaborative.

Groundswell membership includes REDWatch, Counterpoint Community Services, Inner Sydney Voice, Fact tree Youth Service, Redfern Legal Service, Tenants Union (TU) NSW, Shelter NSW and occasionally The Settlement.

Groundswell is the main mechanism where REDWatch works with other agencies on supports for public housing tenants and their issues. It is the mechanism we have used historically to drive human services action on behalf of REDWatch.

Groundswell guides some projects and provides cover to its funded participants from some funders and possible interference. Groundswell guided the LAHC funded Waterloo Capacity Building, Community Development and Aboriginal Liaison roles when LAHC funded these positions.

Currently Groundswell supports the Waterloo Redevelopment Group and has been pushing a localised version of the redevelopment Compact developed by TU and Shelter. It is also proposed to be the guiding mechanism for a new Community Controlled Equity Focused Health Impact Assessment for Waterloo public housing tenants.

Groundswell has been active since 2011 in trying to get human service issues addressed by Government agencies. A few years ago regular bi-lateral meetings began between Groundswell with both DCJ and SLHD. Mike Shreenan (Counterpoint) and Geoff Turnbull (REDWatch) currently represent Groundswell in these human services meetings, but historically these meetings also included Irene Doutney, Charmaine Jones and then Claire Mennie.

The Healthy Living Link Worker position occupied by Shane Brown, the Waterloo Health Impact Assessment (HIA) and the Waterloo Health Forums have come from these regular meetings and the relationships built over time.

The Waterloo Human Services Collaborative emerged from this work (see [Waterloo Human Services Plan NGO Background Paper](#)). This is currently a large and time consuming area for Geoff Turnbull wearing a REDWatch Co-Spokesperson hat, but it can only be undertaken with the support and involvement of other NGOs in collaboration with Government agencies. It has a “changing business as usual” approach but does not come with extra funding except for a DCJ secretariat funded by LAHC.

Under the broad Waterloo Human Services Collaborative meetings sits two Coordination Groups who developed sections of the Waterloo Human Service Action Plan related to front line and systems issues. Those Coordination Groups and their chairs are also responsible for monitoring the groups responsible for implementing their parts of the plan.

Mike Shreenan co-chairs the Waterloo Human Services Collaborative with Briony Forster (DCJ District Director) and Lou-Anne Blunden (SLHD Executive Director Clinical Services Integration and Population Health). Geoff Turnbull co-chairs the Service Integration and Systems Coordination Group with Dr Lisa Simone (SLHD Population Health). Until his resignation from Counterpoint, Adam Antonelli co-chaired the Front Line Coordination Group with Kylie Willis (DCJ Regional Housing Director).

Mike and Geoff on behalf of Groundswell also continue to meet separately with SLHD senior staff and DCJ Senior staff on a three monthly basis around issues specific to those agencies and their agency specific Waterloo human services plans.

As required Geoff and Mike, on behalf of Groundswell, also meeting with LAHC and South Sydney Police who are among the other Government agencies involved in the Waterloo Human Services Collaborative. REDWatch and Counterpoint also participate in their own right at CSPC meetings. Historically other REDWatch members have also attended these CSPC meetings.

Relationship with Council

How we have done it: While REDWatch was initially set up from a meeting in 2004 held by South Sydney Greens and local ALP branches it soon also had representation from the local Liberal Party branch and Clover Moore as local MP. Geoff Turnbull, who with his wife Lyn were producing the Redfern Waterloo Issues Update emails, was asked to become Spokesperson as he was not a member of either the Greens or the ALP and was across local issues.

REDWatch has always tried to ensure there is a mix of political groups represented to provide the widest possible platform for REDWatch’s decisions and action. We try to keep party conflicts out of REDWatch especially during elections. It is not unusual to have REDWatch members standing for different parties at election time.

REDWatch has and builds relationships with Councillors, Council staff and the Office of Lord Mayor. We do not have to worry about the distinctions that Councillors and their staff have to worry about. As an active resident group we participate in resident group meetings and functions put on by the Lord Mayor, Council and Councillors. At the local level we deal with Council staff that attend various community meetings, planning meetings, tenant meetings or human services meetings.

The Council is a large and complex organisation and that often requires REDWatch to deal with a range of staff, ranging from those at the front line to Council's Directors and CEO. Sometimes it is most appropriate to deal with Council Staff, at others it needs to be with Councillors and their staff or with the Office of Lord Mayor (OLM).

Given that most of the sites REDWatch has been concerned about are under the planning control of NSW Government rather than Council, our dealings are usually more about getting support for the community from Council and/or Council staff rather than changing Council proposals.

For example when the NSW Government announced that it was going to sell the Australian Technology Park, REDWatch convinced Council that it should do a risk/benefit analysis of the proposed sale. That report made it possible to push for and achieve easements and positive covenants protecting public access, heritage protections and access, as well as an easement allowing a cross railway bridge to land on what is now Mirvac South Eveleigh that we are still fighting for.

We make sure that Councillors and the staff are aware of REDWatch's concerns by adding staff and Councillors to our email list. If we have a concern about something going to Council we would normally write to all Councillors and the CEO, copying in our OLM contact.

REDWatch tries very hard to stay out of Council politics and prefers to deal with all Councillors equally rather than favour or work with one individual Councillor or block. REDWatch has always tried to have representatives from all political grouping involved. From time to time REDWatch has had Councillors or their staff as members and on the Co-ord group.

Who Does what in REDWatch?

In 2006 REDWatch became incorporated as a NSW Association and its activities are guided by the [REDWatch Incorporated - Rules of Association](#). The Rules include the Objects above and the requirement for a public officer.

The Public Officer – This is Jose Perez – He is responsible for doing our annual returns and is for REDWatch's contact for the Department of Fair Trading that administers the NSW Incorporated Associations Register.

The Articles also specify a number of Officer Positions to be filled annually at our AGM. In some cases people choose to share those roles. This can be a good way to bring in new people to get an understanding of the role and the issues or to split the role in a particular role.

Convenor (s) – The convenor is responsible for bringing people together for meetings and for facilitating the meetings

Spokesperson (s) – The Spokesperson(s) are responsible for speaking publically on behalf of the organisation. This does not preclude people other than a Spokesperson being authorised to speak on particular topics.

Secretary – Responsible for calling AGMs and keeping membership records and maintaining distribution lists.

Treasurer – Responsible for collecting money, paying bills and for fundraising.

In addition to ensure there is good representation at Working Group Meetings the membership decided to elect **four Coordination Group members**. Coordination group / Working Group meetings are open to all members.

Other Volunteer Roles include:

- IT Support and running the server underneath the Website – Currently Jose Perez
- Website Content posting – Currently Spokesperson

- FaceBook posting – Currently Convenor and Spokesperson
- Twitter posting – Currently A Coord Group Member and Spokesperson
- Producing Posters for events – Currently Convenor
- Distribution of flyers – Currently Coord Group members
- Build a new website or raise money to pay someone – Currently The Coord Group is looking!

These are just some of the roles and from time to time these are divided up differently. Some of these roles could be done by people not on the Coord Group. There is also the opportunity for people to bring new activities and skills to assist REDWatch.

Challenges:

One of the challenges facing REDWatch is finding people with an interest in the diverse areas REDWatch focuses on across the four suburbs. In addition there is the challenge of maintaining a diverse political mix on the Coord Group, as well as finding some people who are not members of a political party to fill some roles. Often people prefer to get involved in their immediate neighbourhood or in issue focused groups. Planning and community organising is not high on the issues of interest for many people.

The second challenge is getting new people involved as people move on to other things. We have found it difficult, for example, to hold onto younger people on the Coordination Group because housing stress makes it difficult for them to stay in the area. We welcome people's short term injection of energy and enthusiasm but we also need to build some people with longer term commitments, experience and skills.

The third challenge is that Geoff Turnbull has been around as at least one of two Spokespersons since REDWatch was set up. A lot of the contacts, knowledge and day to day work falls to him. If he gets hit by a proverbial bus then a lot of that knowledge and day to day dealing with issues disappears from REDWatch. Helping to spread that load among others and the mentoring people to take over Geoff's various jobs is important for REDWatch's future existence.

Contact us if you would like to be involved

If after reading this, you would like to become involved further in REDWatch and would like to chat about how you might be able to assist or be mentored into a role, then please contact us at mail@redwatch.org.au or talk to one of the current office bearers.

If you don't want to be on the committee but just want to help on a specific job then reach out and let us know. Every bit helps.

If you are time poor but are in a position to support REDWatch financially then that would be welcome also - the details on how to make a donation are [here](#). We don't really want to add time to fund raise to keep the organisation going on top of everything else we do. As mentioned earlier our website is in need of repair / replacement and for that we need either an experienced volunteer or fundraising to pay for the work.

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