



31st January 2005

To: The Hon. Frank SARTOR, MP
Minister for the Redfern Waterloo
Minister for Energy and Utilities
Governor Macquarie Tower
1 Farrer Place
Sydney NSW 2000

Fax (02) 9228 4711

Attn: Owen Torpy

Dear Mr Sartor,

Views on Community Advisory Structures for Redfern – Waterloo Authority

I am writing on behalf of REDWatch in response to your request for community input on community advisory structures for the RWA.

As you will be aware REDWatch has earlier made representations in its position papers and in our meetings with you to try and strengthen community involvement mechanisms in the legislation. REDWatch's current submission builds on our earlier representations on this matter as well as the many community comments provided to the Legislative Council Inquiry into Redfern Waterloo on the deficiencies of the earlier community consultation and communication strategies of the RWPP.

REDWatch discussed its response at its January meeting which was attended by a wide range of people from across Redfern-Waterloo including representatives from all major political parties in the area as well as a wide range of residents including public tenants, members of the Russian community, unions and churches.

REDWatch would like the Minister to consider a number of issues in establishing the Community Advisory Structures of the RWA:

1) The Community must be treated as a genuine partner in all RWA activities

Successful overseas models have incorporated strong community involvement in urban regeneration. The Morgan Disney Review recommendations which have been accepted by Government call for Government, Services, Service Users and Residents to work together in a co-operative manner to build improved community services in the area. This commitment for all stakeholders to work in genuine partnership building the future is also central to the success of the broader RWA agenda.

2) Maximum transparency should be allowed

If the community does not have access to information it can not work in partnership with the Authority and make constructive input into the processes. In the absence of information rumours breed and mistrust grows. For this reason as far as possible all processes of the RWA should be transparent and the RWA should have a policy of releasing information to the community unless there is genuine commercial sensitivity about some information at a particular time. It should not work on the



basis that all material should be kept confidential unless there is a good reason to make it public.

REDWatch has already written to you asking for the release of the working papers and studies undertaken by the Government as part of the RED Strategy in the lead up to the RWA announcement. Making such information available to the community is important for transparency and for the community's ability to contribute to the Redfern-Waterloo Plan as an informed partner.

The current policy under which the Minister's media advisors have refused to supply media releases and announcements by the Minister about Redfern Waterloo to REDWatch is a not a good start to transparency. Information about the Ministers decisions and the RWA's activities must be widely available especially if the media outlets do not pick up the full story. We hope the current approach to media releases will not be followed in the RWA. Many Ministers have their media statements posted on their websites and this process should be followed on Redfern-Waterloo matters.

REDWatch and other organisations in the area need access to information to ensure that the broad community are aware of what is happening in the area and hence can make informed decisions about their contribution to the RWA.

3) At a minimum, committees should function in line with established Local Government practice

Notices of time of meetings, location and agenda of meetings of committees and other bodies should be publicly available. The public should be allowed to observe committee meetings, unless moved into camera for a particular agenda item, in a similar manner to that which occurs within Local Government. Minutes should be publicly available within 5 days of meetings.

Open public meetings / community forums should also be held by the RWA so that any member of the community can ask questions of the Minister and RWA and contribute their suggestions.

4) Consultation should be in line with the Government's published material on Community Engagement in the NSW Planning System

At a very minimum all consultations should be consistent with the Government guidelines already established for community engagement.

5) RWPP's Community Engagement Strategies to be used as a model

The RWA should develop a community consultation model that follows the previous model put forward, but not acted upon, by the RWPP. The strategies outlined in the RWPP document attached were sound but the strategy has not been followed since its release. Within the RWA there is room for the variety of community involvement mechanisms referred to including a community council, taskforces, community forums, workshops, focus groups, information sessions, public displays and information collection.



In addition however the RWA needs to develop a complimentary communications strategy which includes a range of processes which include but are not limited to Newsletters, email notices and an effective website. The low level of literacy in some parts of the community need also to be taken into account.

The RWA also needs to be aware of the consultation promised to the community under the RED Strategy consultation and the RWA needs to ensure that at least this level of consultation is delivered to the community. A copy of what was given to the community regarding the consultation program after the RED strategy came back from government is attached for your easy reference.

6) There should be a Community Advisory Council

REDWatch remains of the view that there should be a Community Advisory / Community Development Council which advises the Minister across the broad range of issues relating to the Authority. This would play a similar role to that originally proposed for the RWPP by the Community Council. It would need to be more representative of the local community and meet regularly.

It is crucial for the community to have a mechanism across the whole authority to input their concerns and advice. With the advisory groups currently being proposed residents will work with a wide range of other people on a single key component of the RWA's work but they would not be in a position to advise on issues that go across the work areas or which relate to general Authority activities, such as how best to consult the community on a broader matters such as the Redfern-Waterloo Plan.

The separation of the RWA from the RWPP make it very important that there be a community mechanism to ensure that what is happening in either area is taken into account in the other and that any issues that arise can be brought to the RWA's attention and addressed promptly.

The Community Advisory Council could include some people working on the proposed advisory groups in addition to some community representatives with interests or expertise across the broad spread of the RWA's activities. This group should be representative of the community and those appointed should be involved in the community and be able to report back to the community and gather community feedback for the RWA.

A representative Community Council is seen by REDWatch as crucial to the success of community involvement in the RWA process.

7) REDWatch Involvement

REDWatch is an established resident's group which draws its membership from across the area covered by the RWA. REDWatch's major focus is to ensure that there is community input into the RWA and the RWPP. REDWatch is of course only one of the groups working in the area but it is the only residents group that covers the entire area and it focuses on the work being undertaken by the Government through the RWA and the RWPP.



REDWatch will have its own working groups covering areas of the RWA's activities to look at residents issues and concerns in these areas.

Given REDWatch's function we are of the view that REDWatch should be advised of all opportunities for community involvement in the RWA so we can ensure that the community has been advised of the opportunity and we can work to ensure the community is well represented.

Ideally the RWA should recognise REDWatch's unique role and invite REDWatch to nominate a representative to all RWA committees.

8) Making a final decision on Advisory Committees and Engagement Strategies

While we recognise the Minister has the sole responsibility under the Act to set up advisory committees, support for the RWA community engagement strategies would be greatest if the Minister was to take his proposals to a workshop of interested community members for final discussion prior to its implementation. If a Community Advisory Council was in place it could fulfil this role but in its absence a working group of community members who have made recommendations on the advisory structure may be a good way forward for the Minister to assess the support or otherwise for his proposal and to obtain community support for the engagement strategy proposed.

Conclusion

We trust that you will consider the suggestions that have been raised in this letter and that we can look forward to a close working relationship with yourself and the authority staff in the years ahead.

Please be assured that we do seek to make informed "input towards positive outcomes for the area". We trust on this basis that you will be consulting extensively with us as we work to ensure that the RWA's endeavours reflect the needs and aspirations of the very diverse sectors that make up the Redfern Waterloo community.

Yours Faithfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Geoffrey Turnbull', written over a white background.

Geoffrey Turnbull
On Behalf of
REDwatch
C/- PO Box 1567, Strawberry Hills NSW 2012
Ph Wk: 9318 0824 Email: turnbullfamily@stassen.com.au

Redfern/Waterloo Partnership Project (RWPP) Community Engagement Strategies

Redfern/Waterloo Community Council - The Community Council provides advice to Government on the range of issues within Redfern and Waterloo and on the proposed Government response to these. Community representatives are from a number of different interest groups.

RWPP Taskforces – RWPP runs a number of Taskforces around specific areas of community interest. These include:

- Drug & Alcohol Taskforce
- Child & Families Taskforce
- Community Safety Taskforce
- Youth Taskforce

Representatives come from non-Government and Government agencies working in the local area and local residents. Other Taskforces will be established as needed.

Community Forums – Community Forums will be held four times per year and provide the opportunity for residents and other community members to have a direct say on what is happening in Redfern and Waterloo. Government will also report back at these Forums on what they have done in the last 3 months.

Public Discussion Workshops – are open to anyone to attend although pre-registration will be required. The discussion workshops are intended to allow for in-depth discussion around a *specific topic or area of concern*.

Focus Groups – will target specific groups within the community where there is a concern they may not participate in other consultation processes. This is to ensure that these groups have an adequate opportunity to input into areas that RWPP is working on.

Information Sessions and Public Displays – Where appropriate, information sessions will be held to inform the community about specific aspects of particular initiatives. These will only occur as part of a broader consultation process.

Information Collection – Linked to specific initiatives and through surveys, interviews and feedback forms.

Newsletters – RWPP will produce a Newsletter four times per year which will update the community on achievements, ways to become involved in the project and what other agencies are doing in the community in partnership with RWPP

RWPP Website – A website on RWPP has recently been published and includes a variety of information about the initiatives of the Project, including copies of the Newsletters. The website is updated on a regular basis as new information becomes available.

RED STRATEGY COMMUNITY CONSULTATION PROGRAM

DISPLAY OF DRAFT RED STRATEGY

Draft Red Strategy to be displayed at South Sydney City Council for 28 days, the display will be staffed for specific times. Copies of the Draft Strategy will be available for the community and Feed back forms will be used to gather the community's responses. For those members of the community who are not comfortable with providing a written response, verbal interviews will be available.

A travelling Draft RED Strategy display will be set up around the community at the main gathering places, including out of hours venues eg. Redfern Street, Surrey Hills Shopping Mall, Alexandria Park School, Redfern Station, Waterloo Shops, Abercrombie Street shops.

RWPP Newsletter focused on RED Strategy.

Draft Red Strategy to be posted on the RWPP Website.

FOCUS GROUPS

Focus groups will be held for specific community members to ensure widespread community involvement as follows:

- Chinese Community
- Russian Community
- Lebanese Community
- Pacific Islander Community
- Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander Community
- Young people
- Education community
- Senior citizens
- University students
- Public Housing Tenants
- Business Community

PUBLIC DISCUSSION GROUPS

Public Discussion Groups will be held on each of the major issues impacting on the RED area as follows:

- Redevelopment of Redfern Railway Station
- Creation of Pedestrian & Bicycle linkages across rail lines
- Provision of Affordable Housing
- Community Transport
- Revitalisation of Town Centre
- Enhancement of Public Domain
- Increased local employment opportunities
- Development of a Cultural Precinct
- Reducing the Impacts of Regional Traffic

COMMUNITY MEETINGS

Facilitated debate of the RED Strategy by the Redfern/Waterloo Community Council.

Presentation of the RED Strategy at the Community Forum.

Presentation of the RED Strategy to local taskforces, interagency and public forums.

Presentation of Red Strategy at community festivals.