

An Agenda for Redfern Waterloo Changes in 2007 State Election Issues

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REDWatch is a residents and friends group covering Redfern Eveleigh Darlington and Waterloo (the same area covered by the Redfern Waterloo Authority). REDWatch monitors the activities of government activities such as the RWA and RWPP and seek to ensure community involvement in all decisions made about the area.

This policy document has been adopted by a REDWatch General Meeting on 14th February 2007 for use on the REDWatch website and for distribution in the lead up to the 2007 NSW Election. Enquiries concerning this document and any other REDWatch activities concerning the election should be referred to REDWatch Spokesperson Geoffrey Turnbull whose contacts are at the end of this document.

Why we should reassess government activities

The Redfern Waterloo Authority (RWA) was established in December 2004 by an Act of NSW Parliament. The Bill was introduced by the Labor Government and was passed with the support of the Liberal Opposition following some amendments in the upper house by the Liberals, the Greens and the Cross benchers and the government. The 2007 State Election will be the first election to be held since the RWA was established and hence it is an opportune time to question political parties and candidates about what they have done in the past parliamentary term about Redfern Waterloo and what new policies they propose to address the concerns of those that live in the area.

While the operation of the RWA is governed by an Act of Parliament, the Act gives the Minister for Redfern Waterloo, currently Frank Sartor, immense powers over how the RWA operates. The Minister decides who will be on the RWA Board, what consultation and advisory committees will exist and who will be on them. The Minister also decides what will be and will not be in the Redfern Waterloo Plan and how it will be put together. A new Minister could make the RWA operate a very different way and could address many of the concerns REDWatch have detailed in this paper. When REDWatch lobbied Minister Sartor in 2004 over the RWA Bill, the Minister said that he hoped he would have the RWA bedded down so well that no Minister following him would want to change things. The RWA of 2007 is very much a product of its first Minister, and it remains to be seen if his successors will want to change what he has put in place. The 2007 NSW State election holds the possibility of a change of Minister for Redfern Waterloo, either through change of Government or Ministerial reshuffle. There are a number of things REDWatch would want to see a new Minister change.

The Redfern Waterloo Authority (RWA) has now been in operation for over two years. It has established its operational processes, published most of its plans and it is now embarking on the implementation of the plans. The RWA has argued that there had been lots of studies and reports about Redfern Waterloo and that the important thing for the RWA was to get its plans out and start doing something. At the RWA's inception REDWatch was told to wait until all the RWA plans were finalised before you criticise us. With two years' worth of Plans and community experience of the RWA, 2007 is an opportune time to look at how the RWA's activities can be improved.

REDWatch's membership is made of people not affiliated with any party as well as people involved with all major political parties. REDWatch does not support any political party. REDWatch does encourage residents to be actively involved in all aspects of their community life including politics. REDWatch wants to see policies from all political parties that seriously address the needs, concerns and aspirations of those that live and work in Redfern, Eveleigh, Darlington and Waterloo - the suburbs generally referred to as Redfern-Waterloo.

Ideally REDWatch would like to see a non-partisan approach by political parties to work with the communities that live in Redfern Waterloo to find lasting solutions to the areas issues.

Below we have highlighted some of the issues of concern to the community that can be addressed by either changes in Government Policy or by the way the Minister for Redfern Waterloo and the RWA implements the Redfern Waterloo Act. The following outline may assist people wanting to raise these issues with political parties and candidates during the 2007 NSW election.

Failings in Community Consultation and Engagement

The NSW Government has taken control of parts of Redfern Waterloo away from a democratically elected local council and handed control of these areas to a state minister. In addition the Minister for Redfern Waterloo was appointed to be responsible for co-ordinating all state government decisions concerning the area. A substantial amount of power and responsibility was vested with the Minister. The availability of opportunities for the community to discuss their concerns with the Minister and to have input to the decisions was of major concern to the community from the outset and was the topic of the Minister's first communication with the community. In April 2005 the RWA advised the community "How Your Voice Will be Heard" through its newsletter announcing the Minister's decision. The newsletter explained the "Community Consultation Framework" as having three elements linking the community to the Minister: Community Forums, Ministerial Advisory Committees and RWA Working Groups. What was proposed was not necessarily what was delivered.

No Promised Community Forums have been Held

The direct link between the community and the Minister the newsletter said was “A *Community Forum to meet at least four times a year will be open for members of the public to attend. The purpose of this Forum is to provide the Minister with advice on the broad strategic direction of the Redfern-Waterloo Plan and provides the community with a direct link to the Minister*”. The Minister has never implemented this undertaking. The only Redfern Waterloo public meeting attended by the Minister since his appointment as Minister for Redfern Waterloo was held specifically for public housing tenants. While the RWA have held a couple of community meetings the meetings have not been attended by the Minister nor have they performed the functions the Minister promised for Community Forums.

Ministerial Advisory Committees that have never seen the Minister

The Minister proposed three Ministerial Advisory Committees (MACs) made up of an equal number of representatives from government departments and the community to advise the Minister. The community representatives were appointed by the Minister and some concern was expressed about how representative of the community those appointed were, especially as some also worked for the state government. While there have been a number of meetings of each of the MACs, to the best of our knowledge the Minister has never attended any MAC meeting. All meetings are chaired by an RWA employee or Board Member, who may brief the Minister or provide his staff with minutes, but either way this provides a very filtered perspective of any issues of concern raised by community representatives. [Due to the RWA's role in implementing Government policy in Redfern Waterloo there is usually much greater knowledge about what is being planned behind the scene from the government MAC members. They are often involved in preparing policy documents or involved with or aware of cabinet, CEO, Senior Officer and other inter-departmental discussions to which the community representatives are not privy.] The MACs have provided very limited opportunity for community input and acted more as a sounding board for the RWA and Government on their agenda.

RWA Working Groups without community representation

According to the Minister's April 2005 consultation diagram, the MACs were to directly advise the Minister while Working Groups were to advise the Minister through the RWA. The Working Groups do not necessarily include representatives of the community. Human Service providers are concerned that many of the decisions about human services in the area have overlooked important local needs because the decisions are primarily being driven by representatives of government departments and the local experience is being excluded or when expressed it has not been listened to. REDWatch considers that all Working Groups should include at least two community representation with relevant experience who have links to a local community group or service provider.

The Missing Community Council

Under the RWA's predecessor, the Redfern Waterloo Partnership Project (RWPP), the NSW Premier's Department operated a Community Council. The Community Council was made up of elected representatives (local MPs and councillors) and state government selected representatives from some the sectors of the community. While some voiced concerns about the make up of the Community Council and the way it was selectively used by the RWPP, the Council potentially provided a broad representative community body to dialogue with government about the changes proposed. While REDWatch pushed for a similar community council under the RWA, the proposal was not accepted by the Minister. REDWatch hopes the Minister will commit to establishing a broad based Community Council to advise the RWA and the Minister across the range of the RWA's activities after the election.

Inquiry Concerns about Community Engagement remain

The Redfern Waterloo Partnership Project came in for significant criticism in late 2004 from the Legislative Council's Inquiry into Redfern Waterloo. The Inquiry found that the Government needed to substantially improve their Community Engagement processes. REDWatch initially welcomed the RWA proposal for a Minister who could be held politically responsible for Redfern Waterloo. Since the establishment of the RWA the concept of partnership with the community and other tiers of government has been dropped from the state government's programme for Redfern Waterloo, leading much less engagement with the community. This is in contrast to the Upper House Committee's findings that the government should improve its community engagement processes.

Encouraging Community Based Planning

The decision by the NSW Government to switch from the RED Strategy's proposal for Council controlled redevelopment of Redfern Waterloo to a state government controlled Redfern Waterloo Authority indicates a State Government view that State Significant developments and the increased densities required to accommodate population increases across Sydney can not be handled by Local Councils and

local communities. This position has manifested in various forms as the Minister for Planning has called in other major projects such as the CUB site.

REDWatch does not accept the “all communities are anti-development” argument. Experience in both Australia (eg North Sydney) and in the USA (eg Seattle) show that communities will accept city wide growth targets and even, as is the case in Seattle, agree to plans for increased densities. Communities however want a say in where growth is best placed and how it is best handled to maintain important community space and local amenity. REDWatch has often been painted as being anti-development and yet in May 2005 REDWatch proposed to the RWA a process for a community driven planning framework for developing the Redfern Waterloo Plan required under the RWA’s Act. REDWatch does not oppose development in Redfern Waterloo; our argument with the RWA has been about process. Of course not having had input into the formulation of the RWA Plans has meant that REDWatch and other community groups have focused on the short comings of the plans.

Community Consultations in Developing Plans

REDWatch and many other groups and agencies in the area have been concerned about the RWA’s failure to listen to the variety of voices in the local community and find ways to incorporate the community as partners in the decisions made about the area’s future. The RWA has instead formulated Plans that have often already been signed off on by government departments and cabinet before they are shown to the community for comment. As a result little of substance changes and community insights and input are denied. This was especially so in the Human Services Plan and the Employment & Enterprise Plan.

This “development exhibition” style is not robust consultation as it fails to involve the community in the formulation of the plans and the only provides the opportunity to a comment on the draft plan. In the case of the RWA Built Environment Plan there were a large number of changes following public exhibition. In large part these changes resulted directly from the RWA rushing its formulation of the draft plan and not doing the work that should have been done before its release. The final Built Environment Plan hence included a significant amount of new material which the community had no opportunity to make any comment upon at all.

In contrast the City of Sydney has undertaken a number of consultations concerning their planning responsibilities in Redfern Waterloo in the last year. These have involved opportunities for input to consultants and council officers prior to the preparation of plans in addition to the “development exhibition” consultation phase. There usually has been a lot of community input into the plan or review before it goes out on exhibition. REDWatch is of the view that the City of Sydney approach to consultation sees the formulation of better decisions as well as greater community acceptance of the decisions made when compared to the process used to date by the RWA. We note that the City recently hosted a talk on the Seattle approach to community involvement in planning and that the City may move further towards facilitating more community level planning. The City’s direction is similar to the process proposed to the RWA by REDWatch in May 2005.

Dialogue Experience with the RWA

REDWatch has held a number of meetings with either Robert Domm, the RWA CEO, or with RWA Human Services staff. REDWatch is pleased that the RWA has always been prepared to accept REDWatch invitations and explain their current plans. These discussions have always been informative about the RWA’s plans and some of the thinking behind them. Regrettably the meetings have seldom seen any of the concerns raised at the meetings taken up by the RWA as issues that need to be investigated or taken into account in the RWA plans. The impression is very much that community concerns are not on the RWA agenda which is being driven almost only by the NSW Government and Department agendas. Many local service providers and other groups, including Gary Moore who as Director of New South Wales Council of Social Services (NCOSS) co-chaired the RWA’s Human Services MAC, have raised similar concerns.

The Need for a Shared Vision

When the RWA Legislation was introduced the Bill didn’t include Objects. The inclusion of general Objects was one of a number of changes REDWatch managed to have changed in the Bill. REDWatch has argued in our submission on the RWA Built Environment Plan that when the RWA combines their various Plans into a single Redfern Waterloo Plan they also need to incorporate a vision statement of what the Plan seeks to achieve. Without this we can end up with activity but no clear vision of where the RWA is heading. REDWatch does not want to see another “motherhood” statement incorporated as the vision for the RWA. REDWatch believes that the RWA should use the opportunity provided by the need to develop a vision statement to consult broadly with the community and to develop a vision that is shared between the communities that make up Redfern Waterloo and the Government. Some elements of what

might be in this vision statement can be found in some of the RED Strategy documents which resulted from a brief earlier consultation with the community.

The Challenge of Working Together

When the Redfern Waterloo Partnership Project was disbanded, the concept of partnership with the community was dropped from the Government lexicon. It is not clear if this was a consequence of the Minister chosen to establish the RWA, if it was a change of Government policy or just a smart way getting around the Inquiry into Redfern Waterloo's criticism of the government for not actively engaging the community. Whatever the reason it is opportune to call again for a Partnership between the Government and the various communities of Redfern and Waterloo.

With most of the RWA's Plans now public, and with the RWA entering the implementation phase, it is time to re-visit the concept of partnership. We largely know now what the Government wants from its involvement in Redfern Waterloo. It is now time for the Minister and the RWA to listen to what the various parts of the community want and to see if both can be achieved in some way. To do this there is a need to build a new partnership between the community and the RWA.

There is no reason for those that question or are critical of the RWA to be cut out of the process. They are after all those who are interested in what happens in their community and they are prepared to voice their concerns. It does not mean that the RWA should do what the loudest talkers say but that the Minister and the RWA need to find ways of listening to the broad range of community concerns and find ways of working with the community to address those concerns. The Minister and the RWA need to work at building a genuine partnership with the community which is aimed at ensuring that the existing Redfern Waterloo communities get the maximum benefit from the RWA and the government's involvement in Redfern Waterloo.

Information Flows and Transparency

Information Dissemination and Control

The RWA have a well established website (although still without a working search function) and the RWA has producing a reasonable number of newsletters through which they seek to inform the community about the RWA's achievements, activities and the material on public exhibition. The RWA have however not always resisted the temptation to use the Newsletters to 'spin' their position on Redfern Waterloo. Who can forget the RWA Update issue with the Open Letter from the Minister to Mick Mundine at the height of the RWA – AHC standoff over the Block as an example?

The Minister's media management also includes a policy of not inviting local media, community leaders or key information disseminators to public launches and media conferences related to Redfern Waterloo. While this might avoid the Minister being asked difficult questions by people who have local knowledge it also means that RWA / Government stories which have not been picked up by mainstream media do not readily get out to the local community in a timely manner.

While the Local Council engages with local residents groups as well as local Chambers of Commerce, the RWA has incorporated in to its Built Environment Plan only involvement with the Redfern Waterloo Chamber of Commerce (RWCC). While the City of Sydney has links to Chambers of Commerce and Residents Groups on their web site the RWA only links to the RWCC and has no links to residents groups. A request for a link from the RWA website to the REDWatch site has been declined on the basis that REDWatch is political. This is despite the fact that the REDWatch website has carried, at the RWA request, Human Services Consultation documents not carried by the RWA's own website.

While it is common for Government organisations to manage the media it can also further distance the Authority from the very community it supposedly exists to service. The RWA needs to find ways to actively engage with community organisations including residents groups rather than turn them in to their opponents.

The need for transparency

Under Local Government there is a level of transparency and opportunity for involvement in decision making which has been lost currently under the RWA. With Council, meeting dates for committees and council are known in advance, as are the agendas and the minutes detailing what has been decided. If there is an issue of concern on the agenda those interested can contact council officers, councillors and address committee meetings. None of this is possible with the way the RWA has been established by the Minister. While in Council sensitive matters can be considered in camera, in the RWA everything is conducted away from public view and only becomes public if thought worthy of mention in a newsletter or

on the website or it is mentioned in conversation by RWA staff. REDWatch is of the view that the RWA should conduct its activities in a transparent manner similar to local council.

RWA Board, committee meeting and Ministerial Advisory Committee dates and agendas should be publicly posted on the RWA website so people know when meetings are being held and what is being considered. Minutes of such meetings should also be publicly posted as should Ministerial Decisions and Delegations. There is probably also a case for Board and committee meetings being open for the public to attend. After all even a council administrator conducts meetings in public.

Under Council, Development Applications (DAs) that receive significant opposition are usually dealt with by Council Committee at which proponent and objectors can speak. Currently the RWA deals with all DAs under delegation and there are no mechanisms for objectors to verbally put their case. Council also make available, in council officers' reports, details of submissions received on a matter under consideration by Council. This transparency is important for those concerned about an altered decision to understand why changes have been made. While the RWA has released some submissions on its Human Services Plans, the RWA has not released submissions on the Employment & Enterprise Plan or the Built Environment Plan, or any of the DAs the RWA has handled.

REDWatch accepts that, as is the case with some council decisions, some market sensitive material needs to be kept confidential. The existence of such material should not prevent meeting times, agendas and minutes being made publicly available as is the case for Councils.

Government must adequately Fund Redfern Waterloo

RWA Sales Pay for State rather than Local Capital Works

The RWA was initially set up as a self funding authority although two years down the track it seems to have been recognised that, initially at least, the RWA will not be able to operate without some additional government funds. It is still of concern however that rather than spending funds from developments in the area on improving local infrastructure, the sale of land and developer contributions are planned to be used to re-develop Redfern Railway Station or to try and address the problems caused by the arterial roads near Redfern Railway station. While the Town Hall station upgrade is coming from the State Works Budget, the RWA is expected to pay for most of the cost of an upgrade of Redfern Station by the sale of development approved Government owned land in the RWA area. The proposed RWA Works budget only proposes only \$1.2 million for new community facilities for the 18,000 extra people working in the area and for the 2,000 extra residents proposed. By contrast over \$15 million in the proposed RWA Works Budget is earmarked to lessen the impact of the state's arterial roads on access to Redfern Railway Station. At the same time existing human services can not service the existing population let alone the proposed increase and a major issue is for community services to have adequate accommodation to operate their services.

Yes Premier - More Money is Needed to Provide Human Services

One of the most frustrating government policies impacting on Redfern Waterloo is the Government decision imposed on the RWA that there will be no new human services funding for Redfern Waterloo. The expectation was that the RWA would reform human services and that a more efficient organisation of service providers and programmes would release funds for new initiatives. This logic has been found to be flawed. The upshot has been that RWA staff have to continually say that no extra money is available to service providers even though there is a clear and demonstrate need for new funding if the RWA Human Services Plans are to work. This is an area that must be taken up during the election campaign with the government and the opposition parties. It is simply not possible to address the high needs of the area adequately with existing funding. While this policy remains in place it makes a mockery of any suggestion that the RWA is developing a viable Human Services Plan for the area. While this government policy continues in operation the RWA should at least document the issues which can not be addressed due to lack of funding. These needs can be taken up in future budget submissions to the state government by the RWA or the Human Services Departments. In the meantime the government needs to drop the ludicrous line that there are enough resources already in the area as all it is doing is causing antagonism with those aware of the situation and furthering the belief that the government is not really serious about addressing the areas human services needs.

Expecting Government Departments to increase Redfern Waterloo expenditure without extra funding is not sustainable

One of the significant outcomes of the Human Service Plan was that it recognised that many of the area's problems required government departments to commit more money to their core activities in Redfern Waterloo. Early intervention and education programmes lifting basic literacy and numeracy are obvious

examples. The concern however is that there was no budgetary allocation to fund these increased activities. Instead departments were expected to fund such activities from within their existing budgets. This potentially sees resources to make aspects of the Redfern Waterloo Plan work needing to be taken from other areas and other programmes. This might be fine if this is only happening for Redfern Waterloo but tighter NSW budget restraints and the imperatives of the State Plan are seeing similar requirements being placed on departments from a number of different directions. REDWatch is concerned that aspects of the Human Services Plan which may make a significant difference to Redfern Waterloo will not eventuate due to the lack of budgetary support. Candidates and political parties should be asked if they will push government to ensure that all government departments receive sufficient budgetary funding to meet their service obligations under the Redfern Waterloo Human Services Plan.

A Lack of Planning Integration

REDWatch and organisations like NCOSS have been arguing since that the RWA was announced, that there is a need for a fully integrated approach to Redfern Waterloo. Such an approach would have seen issues looked at in a holistic and inter-related way. Under the current Minister's process the Redfern Waterloo Plan is the combination of the RWA's Human Services Plan, Employment & Enterprise Plan and Built Environment Plan. Ministerial Advisory Committee (MAC) Members have reported that attempts to look at linkages between their area and that of other MACs have been discouraged. In REDWatch's view this separation of all of Redfern Waterloo's issues into these three areas is inadequate. Not only are important aspects missing (such as a shared vision for the area) but also the important interactions between them. REDWatch has voiced these concerns in a number of our submissions. We have been concerned that aspects that may be important to the community but not high on the Government's agenda will be missed in the development of the RWA's plan for Redfern Waterloo. Our concerns have increased over time. Below we have detailed some examples that currently do not fit into the RWA's Plans.

Public Housing policy and the RWA

While much has been said by the RWA about Redfern Waterloo's high unemployment levels and high human services needs seldom is this linked to the high level of public housing in the area and the government's public housing policies. It is current NSW government policy, resulting from federal funding restrictions, to limit new public housing admissions to people with the highest needs. As the number of people wanting housing increases the level of needs of those entering public housing also increases. At the same time the government is introducing limited tenure leases so public tenants whose situation improves can be moved out to allow access for a higher needs tenant. All this has the effect that over the life of the RWA we expect to see an significant increase in the needs of public tenants in the area which, if not properly met, will also see an increasing impact on everyone who lives and works in the area.

Human Service providers say that the existing level of human need in the area is not currently being matched by sufficient human services. If as a result of changes to government policy the needs of public tenants increases then the tenants and the community should be assured that the government services necessary to meet this increased need will also increase. The NSW government's current position articulated by the RWA is that there will be no additional government funding to meet existing unmet need and that in the longer term public tenants in the area will be diluted by a doubling of the areas population.

The interconnections between public housing admission, human services and unemployment also impact upon unemployment. The RWA's Employment and Enterprise Plan has to take account that those that they successfully help into employment will be pushed out of public housing into an inner city housing market they will not be able to afford. Their place in public housing will be taken by probably a higher needs person requiring higher levels of support to get a job. These interconnections link together the yet unseen RWA affordable housing policy (needed by the person who has a job but loses public housing), the RWA Employment and Enterprise Strategy (which will need to be ongoing as each public housing tenant it helps will be replaced by a higher needs tenant) and the RWA Human Services Plan (which will need to service higher needs public tenants more of which are likely to not be able to be made readily "job ready").

The RWA Plans are predicated on government being able to solve the problems of those that live in the area. This is a laudable objective with which REDWatch is in agreement. Our concern is however that the results of this hard work in the eyes of the RWA Plans seems to be that the human services needs in Redfern Waterloo will be reduced while current government housing policy indicates that the level of need in the area will actually increase and required increased human services expenditure. Effective integrated planning for the future of Redfern Waterloo will need to address and service an increase in human services needs. To date we have not seen in the Human Services Plans how the RWA will address this.

Planning Services for the Aged

Redfern Waterloo has a significant aging population. Some current aged services, such as for those with dementia, are at capacity. There has been a strong voice from the community that there is a need for increase supported accommodation and nursing home beds in the area. It was argued by many in the community that Rachel Forster hospital should not be sold until after there had been an assessment of the needs for aged and supported accommodation in the area. This is clearly an example of the linkage between human services and the built environment. On the Human Services side people were told it was a matter for the Built Environment Plan and on the Built Environment side people were told that this was not in the Human Services Plan priorities. From the community side people want to see some work done on what are, and will be, the aged care needs of the community and then how these can be met within the RWA Plan. The current RWA solution of publicising local services more so everyone knows about them when they are already at capacity will not supply a long term solutions to the areas aging population.

Planning for the Area's Future Needs

Prior to the establishment of the RWA the NSW Government closed down Redfern Public School due to declining enrolments. At the same time they also tried to close Erskineville Public School. Today Erskineville is expanding and Darlington Public School is only taking children from within area. In the next few years Darlington is supposed to pick up children from the new developments in Eveleigh, The Block and the CUB site. Redfern Waterloo is already picking up population from developments on the ACI site end of Waterloo. This is all prior to the RWA unveiling its plan to double the areas population and dilute the concentration of public housing tenants. The City of Sydney Council is already documenting a baby boom where those expected to leave the city to have children are staying in the inner city. All this points to the potential need for not only childcare and pre-school places in Redfern Waterloo but also potentially for a new school. REDWatch has argued that the RWA should have retained the former Redfern Public School in State Government ownership so it could have been re-used for a public school if required. The RWA has taken the position that the decision to close the school pre-dates it and that as it is surplus Government land it could be sold. Redfern schools retention in community use, rather than as the initially proposed by the RWA as a housing development, is considered a good result but this does not negate the broader issue that forward planning work should have been done by the RWA on the projected needs of their plan before any government land was sold. The RWA view is that should the area need a new public school in 20 years time then the Government will have to buy up inner city land at that time. This seems very short sighted to REDWatch and to many in the community. REDWatch would like to see the findings of a study of the projected community needs for the expanded Redfern Waterloo community before any further publicly owned land, including the former Rachel Foster Hospital, is sold off by the RWA.

Planning for the Least Powerful

Apart from diluting the public tenants the RWA has offered no plan for how the increased polarity will be managed between higher needs public tenants and the increasingly Redfern Waterloo Manhattan. The RWA plans to date, primarily aimed at Aboriginal people, have been aimed trying to assist people into employment and away from dependence on welfare. While this is a very important component of the government and the RWA's work, the RWA needs to also recognise that for every person helped into employment another arm of government will replace them with a higher needs person. As a result, if housing allocation policy does not change, high needs people will continue to live in the area, irrespective of how successful the RWA programmes are. Planning for the future of Redfern Waterloo needs to work out how to manage the increased polarity in the area between the least powerful and those who can afford to live in the desirable inner city. Ensuring that adequate levels of services are available to meet the needs of the local community is one part of the long term strategy but it is not the only part. If public housing is to be higher turnover, as is being encouraged by current government policy, there will be increased social isolation and reduced support networks among public housing tenants with an increase likelihood of ongoing anti-social behaviour and conflict between those with few resources and those who can afford the up market inner city lifestyle. The RWA and the government have yet to come up with a integrated plan for least powerful in the new Redfern Waterloo.

Will Current RWA Plans give us lasting solutions?

It is widely believed that the RWA's primary focus is the redevelopment of Government owned land in Redfern Waterloo and that the Human Services and Employment aspects have been tacked on to make it look like the RWA is also addressing the areas social problems. The RWA disputes this but the lack of resources and planning for long term solutions to the areas problems lends support to this view for many people. REDWatch's argued in its May 2005 submission to the RWA that there should be a strategic framework which showed how the different aspects of the RWA Plan would fit together to address the areas issues. REDWatch's fear then, and now, is that the Redfern Waterloo Plan will cover what the State

Government wants to develop and reorganise but that it will not provide lasting solutions for the areas issues. At the end of the RWA process we may find an area with double the current population, a large population coming into the area to work and an even more disadvantaged marginalised community. The RWA is yet to demonstrate how this will not be the outcome. Until they can demonstrate this, scepticism about the RWA's commitment to the non-built environment aspects of their operation are likely to continue.

Some Other Planning Issues of Concern

The Need for Improved Co-ordination between Council and the RWA

The RWA has been established with a limited life. After 10 years or so the areas the RWA has taken control of will revert to being handled by Council. Council is an elected body, representing the broader City communities and hence brings a balance of the resident's perspective on issues and process as well its expertise in handling major development issues. It is vital that Council and the RWA have excellent co-operation and co-ordination.

The relationship between the RWA and Council was initially quite strained. In part this was due to the shared history of the Minister, the City Lord Mayor, some of the RWA Board Appointees and the ex City now RWA CEO. The decision by the Lord Mayor to decline a position on the RWA Board due to the secrecy provisions further weakened the link between the City and the RWA. In the first year of the RWA the relationship between the RWA and Council was poor. While the relationship seems to have improved in the last year there is further room for improvement. It is in residents interests that the City and the RWA take a co-operative approach to addressing the areas issues be they in the delivery of human services, complimentarily in planning controls or in putting joint pressure on government departments for transport changes. Council has an important role also in monitoring the RWA to ensure that RWA supervised developments include provision for the increased services needed to service the increased worker and residential population in the RWA Plans. Any short fall in such provisions will fall back onto the council.

Building on our Heritage

There are often many options about how an area is developed. Under the current RWA model these decisions are made by the Minister and the local community has the right to comment on the Minister's plans while they are on exhibition. This does not always deliver the best outcomes. Currently there is a push by REDWatch and some of those who have worked at the Eveleigh Rail yards to retain some active rail heritage use within the RWA's Eveleigh re-development. The Large Erecting Shop in South Eveleigh is being used for rail heritage and this could be retained and developed further to support heritage tourism and maintain a valuable heritage link to the rail yards that defined much of the Area over the last 130 years. Currently the RWA Built Environment Plan shows the "Large" as both as a heritage building and also as being zoned for an up to 12 storey building. REDWatch, the National Trust, Friends of Eveleigh and many others are of the view that a modest investment in the Large could provide heritage training, tourism and an active link with the area's past. Such approaches have been successfully adopted in some other cities. Similarly a proposal for a heritage walk linking all the heritage sites with some exhibitions and interpretive signage seems to REDWatch to be worthy of further exploration and support. The adaptive reuse of some railway buildings in a re-developed Eveleigh is not the only option for recognising and continuing our historical associations with the area.

Rushed Decisions leave Important Areas out of Future RWA Plans

The Act requires the Minister to formulate the Redfern Waterloo Plan and to keep it under review. It is not clear currently how this will be implemented in the case of the Built Environment Plan (BEP). What is clear is that the stand off between the Minister and the Aboriginal Housing Company (AHC) over the re-development of The Block has seen The Block go from an important public site under the RED Strategy to almost irrelevant under the BEP. In recent months it appears as if the relationship between the Minister and the AHC has improved and that an accommodation about the re-development of The Block will be reached. If this happens REDWatch would like to see the BEP revised to recognise the important role of the Block to Redfern Waterloo. The current RWA works allocation of \$100,000 for lighting and seating on the Block is inadequate and REDWatch would like to see the RWA support and encourage the construction of RED Square as a public space linking The Block to Redfern Railway station and the rest of Redfern.

The Lesson from the RWA – AHC Battle

While there is hope that the Minister will allow the AHC's proposal for the Block to go ahead and that the standoff is over, it should not be forgotten that the Minister's and the RWA's adversarial approach to the AHC has created much animosity towards the RWA and the Minister in the community and has lead to

repeated calls for the Minister's resignation. The government and the RWA have tried to bully an Aboriginal organisation, including by using of planning controls, to get the Government's plan for The Block in place against the wishes of the AHC and local people. Ironically the AHC was one of the few parties that had a formal Partnership Agreement with the Premier's departments RWPP prior to the RWA. The damage done by the RWA handling of the AHC alone should be enough to encourage the Government and the RWA to find new ways of working with the Redfern Waterloo community. If there is a lesson from the RWA – AHC it has to be that the RWA and the Minister needs to listen to and work with the community rather than try and ride rough shod over it in the name of state significance?

The Content of the Plans

We have not gone here into the specific content of the various Plans produced by the RWA. REDWatch has previously made submissions on these plans and our concerns can be found on the REDWatch website. Links to Major REDWatch documents can be found below:

[Submission on Preparation of Redfern Waterloo Plan](#)

[<http://www.redwatch.org.au/redwatch/statements/050531Plan/>]

[Submission on RWA Draft Human Services Plan\(Phase One\)](#)

[<http://www.redwatch.org.au/redwatch/statements/051111dhsp/>]

[Submission on RWA Employment Enterprise Plan](#)

[<http://www.redwatch.org.au/redwatch/statements/060228redwatcheesub/>]

[Submission to the RWA Built Environment Plan](#)

[<http://www.redwatch.org.au/RWA/statesignificant/ssbackground/submissions/redwatch/view/>]

[Submission on Draft Human Services Plan \(Phase 2\)](#)

[<http://www.redwatch.org.au/RWA/humanservices/phase2paper/redwatchhsp2/view/>]

[Submission on RWA Draft Redfern-Waterloo Authority Contributions Plan 2006](#)

[<http://www.redwatch.org.au/RWA/statesignificant/dcplans/061215redwatch/>]

[Submission on Draft RWA Affordable Housing Contributions Plan 2006](#)

[<http://www.redwatch.org.au/RWA/statesignificant/dcplans/070212redwatch/>]

Obviously there are many questions that can be asked of candidates and parties in the lead up to the election based on the plans. These may include asking about the candidates view about the three eighteen storey towers being planned for the Redfern Central Core opposite Redfern Station, the doubling of Redfern Waterloo's population, affordable housing and the proposed redevelopment of public housing proposed in Stage Two of the BEP.

It is not possible for us to go in to all possible issues here. Instead we have tried to sketch out some of the overarching issues which if properly addressed would see a more inclusive planning process and the opportunity for those that currently live and work in Redfern Waterloo to have the opportunity to raise their concerns and have their suggestions properly considered.

The 2007 Election Provides an Opportunity for Change

With the RWA Plans largely public it is an opportune time to reflect on what has and what has not been achieved by the RWA and its Minister in its first two years. Are there gaps in the plans and processes that need to be addressed? Are there opportunities to create greater co-operation and dialogue between the community, the Minister and the RWA to deliver a better outcome for the area?

The 2007 State Election provides an opportunity to question all political parties about their past positions on Redfern Waterloo and on their policies for the future of the area. The election also presents the possibility of a change in Minister, irrespective of the election outcome.

If the Minister does change we hope that the new minister will take a greater personal interest in meeting with the community and listening to their concerns and that some of the concerns raised in this paper will find a more receptive ear than has been the case in the past. Hopefully this might result in a new partnership between the Government, Opposition Parties and the Community to deliver real and lasting outcomes for Redfern Eveleigh Darlington and Waterloo.

REDWatch has also prepared a series of questions based on this document for distribution to candidates. Responses will appear on the REDWatch website <http://www.redwatch.org.au/redw/elections/state2007/>

For further information on the issues raised contact the REDWatch Spokesperson:

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14 Feb 2007