

REDWatch Submission to
City Of Sydney Council concerning
Provision for Local Action Plan (LAP) Grants in
The City of Sydney Budget 2007/2008

REDWatch is concerned that draft City of Sydney Council 2007/2008 Budget has dropped the proposal for Local Action Plan (LAP) Grants and we urge Council to reinstate the introduction of this grants programme into the 2007/2008 budget at least to enable a trial of the proposed programme.

The Redfern Waterloo Community Safety Plan encourages activities which bring the community together and help to build community and trust. These are some of the outcomes attributed to the Seattle scheme of which Jim Dears spoke when he addressed council staff, residents and councilors in late 2006. The LAP grants programme was proposed to operate on a similar basis to the Seattle scheme and is generally supported by REDWatch.

Many of the fairs and other community activities that brought local communities together have disappeared over the years in the inner city. Such activities have been further inhibited in recent times by the rising cost of public liability insurance and street closures with the effect that at a time when there is increased turnover of residents there are less opportunities for residents to come together and build community cohesion.

In REDWatch's view one of the ways to strengthen community cohesion and civic participation is for council to operate a LAP Grants programme that will enable members of the community to come together with council to undertake local community projects. The camaraderie of such activities not only provides local civic works, owned by the community but also builds stronger local communities.

As part of implementing such a project Council will need to consider issues such as how best to insure those involved in the LAP projects conducted under the grants. In exploring the issues connected to insurance REDWatch encourages council to look for a solution that also addresses the insurance issues facing residents and community groups who wish to hold community activities. This is probably one of the major impediments to creating active local communities.

REDWatch encourages Council to explore insurance schemes such as those operated by North Sydney for their precinct groups and by Manly council which allow community activities to be covered by councils own insurance policy.

We appreciate that Council has to be responsible in its budget. On a financial basis leveraging councils expenditure with community participation makes good financial sense even though there will also be some council borne implementation costs.

But a City of villages is not just about the civic works it is about helping create the community that lives in those villages. It is about opportunities for involvement, breaking down barriers, building relationships and creating local identity and ownership.

REDWatch submits that such community development is also very important for council to encourage and that the LAP Grants provide a good mechanism to both help create community and to create local civic works.

REDWatch hence calls on council to reinstate the LAP Grant programme in the 2007-8 budget and to undertake a trialing of the LAP grants programme so that a fully functioning LAP grants programme can be introduced in 2008-9.

REDWatch also supports the return of Jim Dears as proposed this year to help promote improved understanding of the Seattle programme and to promote greater dialogue of how the programme may be implemented in the City of Sydney with best effect.

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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 government activities such as the RWA and seeks to ensure community involvement in all decisions made about the area. More details can be found at www.redwatch.org.au.