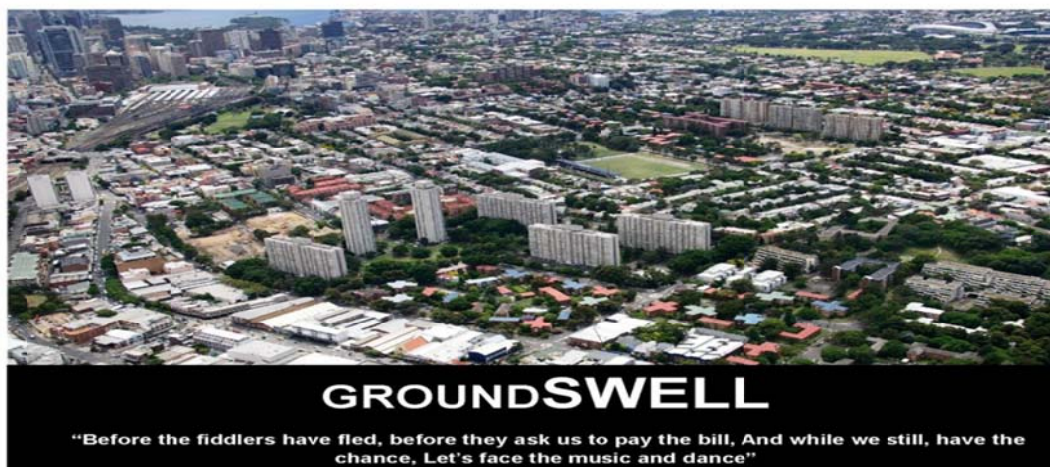


Be Part of a Groundswell



An invitation to support a Redfern and Waterloo Coalition supporting residents

Food for Thought

The quotes below seem applicable to the situation agencies and residents find themselves in

"Before the fiddlers have fled, Before they ask us to pay the bill, And while we still, Have the chance, Let's face the music and dance" – Writer Irving Berlin Performed by Frank Sinatra

"People need to be educated for participation, developing consciousness of their situation, to see what happened and why. You cannot just ask people what they want, people to have to learn how to ask, analyse and question. It is a dialectical process rather than information giving one" - Paulo Freire

"If the structure does not permit dialogue the structure must be changed" — Paulo Freire.

A recent meeting of residents and non-government agencies in Redfern and Waterloo decided to establish a coalition to provide support and facilitation for residents independent of Housing NSW and government agencies. The first step in this process was to form a resident and agency coalition which will facilitate a community discussion about the area's issues and what assistance residents and agencies need to respond.

The need for a coalition grew out of the experience of how Housing NSW and Redfern Waterloo Authority went about consultation for Built Environment Plan Stage 2 and concern about what this approach will mean for coming consultations about the future shape of public housing and the whole of Redfern and Waterloo. Attendees at the initial meeting also felt that government was sidelining NGOs in the process and as a result being able to manipulate the processes to achieve its own ends which were maybe not in line with residents' interests. It was felt that independent support for residents was needed so that they understand what is being proposed and were able to be involved more equally in a discussion about their area, services and future.

We have enclosed a flyer we are circulating encouraging people to join in the initial Groundswell discussion. We hope to tap very broadly into the community through existing groups and networks. Ideally those attending can feed into the process what others are thinking and take information back to their groups and networks.

You will also notice that we have not added the names of organisations to this initial leaflet. There are two main reasons for this. Firstly we thought the idea should go out without people judging it by what they think about the names of the organisations on the list. Secondly we wanted to provide the opportunity to other organisations working in the area to join the coalition or add their support before a list is made public.

At the first meeting it was decided that membership of the coalition would be limited to non-government agencies. Having said this however we hope that workers of goodwill in local, state and federal government will encourage involvement in Groundswell and support it to the extent they are able.

What are we asking you to consider?

1 Can your Organisation publically join or support the Coalition?

We would like agencies working in Redfern and Waterloo to consider joining the Coalition. This provides for a wide base of organisations supporting residents and takes some pressure off tenant support services specifically funded by Housing NSW that have been absorbing much of the pressure from government and residents to date.

Agencies joining the coalition should be prepared to work with other agencies around the prime focus of supporting and or resourcing Redfern and Waterloo residents. Decisions about support programs coming from the Groundswell discussions with tenants and where they might be best auspiced are to be decided by the Coalition.

If you are unable to join the coalition for any reason please consider being publically listed as a supporter of Groundswell. Public support can be given by organisations and individuals.

2 Can your organisation provide expertise, resources or assistance for the Groundswell?

There is no funding available yet for Groundswell. For Groundswell to happen it has to, at least initially, run with the support of agencies from non-project funds, residents and volunteers. Depending on the outcome of the initial Groundswell discussion the coalition may explore if it is possible to get financial support for Groundswell and where such a project is best auspiced. Even if this happens there will likely still be a requirement for agencies involved to support Groundswell with staff time and other agency resources if it is going to work.

One initial area that you can provide assistance is to print off a few copies of the attached leaflet. Leave them in your centre where clients can see them, give them to your workers and clients and groups – this is one way of spreading the cost of letting people know about Groundswell throughout the whole community.

Another strategy being employed is to put together a list of 'independent' volunteers who are prepared to be called up to support Groundswell. For example this might be people with facilitation or community development skills; professionals such as architects, planners or researchers who can work with residents to help them understand planning or technical subjects; web site designers and administrators who can make a community information website or a website similar to www.vodafail.com to monitoring Housing NSW responses to tenant complaints etc. So if you have board members, volunteers or supporters who may be able to assist Groundswell in any of these ways please ask them to consider putting their names and skills forward.

3 Encouraging Involvement in the Groundswell Discussion

All services, agencies and their staff have contact with a range of community groups. In the course of you and your staff's work in the community we ask you to tell people about Groundswell and encourage people to talk with others in the community about Groundswell and to get involved in the discussion.

While we are putting out a general invitation it will be the personal encouragement of people working in the area that is most likely to lead to a wide involvement in the discussion.

We look forward to your support of Groundswell in whatever ways you are able.

Together we hope we can resource residents so they can identify their issues, understand what is happening and then make considered responses on the issues.

Would you like to be part of Groundswell..? Do you agree with the proposal..? Can you support it..? Contact us on groundswell.coalition@gmail.com