

## Public Housing Next in RWA Sights

The Redfern Waterloo Authority (RWA) has announced that in partnership with the Department of Housing (DoH), they will research the options for the revitalisation of public housing and the opportunities that may be created for enhanced availability of affordable housing in the area.

In November 2004 NSW cabinet documents, leaked to the *Sydney Morning Herald* (SMH), revealed the government agenda for Redfern Waterloo included redevelopment of public housing. Immediately following the leak the RWA Minister denied any plans and provided assurances that all tenancies were safe. A special meeting was organised by Minister Sartor with public tenants in July 2005 to reassure public tenants that their tenancies were safe and that the RWA had no current plans.

In September 2005 the RWA announced that "reform of public housing is seen as a priority issue for the future Stage Two of the Redfern-Waterloo Plan". The RWA Draft Built Environment Plan (BEP) confirms this direction, reiterating assurances that "there will be no cuts to the amount of public housing, current residents will not be disadvantaged and all public tenancies are secure". Stage Two will "revitalise public housing stock, improve the associated public domain, reduce concentration of public housing, increase the local population to establish a more sustainable social mix and facilitate the provision of affordable housing, including a shared equity model of home ownership." (BEP p.69)

Stage One of the RWA's BEP is primarily focused on commercial development with planning for 18,000 jobs but only 4,000 more residents. The SMH cabinet documents talked of doubling the area's population with 12,500 of this increase being private tenants in 6,300 apartments on 15.8 hectares of previously DoH land. This was to be made possible by the RWA changing the zonings so that 3 times the number of units could be built on the existing 23.4 hectares of DoH land. The funds from this development would allow the RWA / DoH over time to obtain new housing stock and renovate suitable existing housing stock to provide "revitalised" public housing for the DoH on about a third of the existing land. While the SMH talked about the high rise being under threat, it is more likely that lower density sites would be developed first and the high rise, with long economic life and good service access, would be retained.

We do not know if there is an existing cabinet decision regarding DoH land to be implemented or if the RWA just has broad guidelines. Minister Sartor's main criticism of the AHC's project is that they believe it perpetuates a concentration of high dependency housing. We are aware that the RWA's position regarding the Block is based on a cabinet decision made around the time of the SMH document, so it is possible a similar decision regarding the area's public housing exists. This seems consistent with the RWA's aim to "reduce concentration of public housing" with "no cuts to the amount of public housing".

The RWA says the redevelopment will also provide opportunities for "affordable housing" although what is meant by this is not yet clear. One of the RWA aims is to assist local unemployed people gain employment with building contractors and in other businesses. From July 2005 new DoH tenants may lose their housing entitlement as a result of gaining employment. If these tenants gain employment through the RWA's employment plan, will they be evicted from DoH housing? If so, will they be given priority for newly created affordable housing and be able to remain in the area? REDWatch believes that the RWA may not yet understand the way their proposed employment solutions for the area interact with DoH and other departmental policy that create employment disincentives and poverty traps.

It should be noted that the Elizabeth Street re-development has been specifically excluded from the RWA's ambit and remains with DoH. However we would expect the RWA to take a considerable interest in its progress as any problems will clearly have repercussions for the RWA's subsequent developments. Both DoH and the RWA must find willing private partners for any of these plans to eventuate, which has been difficult elsewhere; although the desirability of inner-city real estate may assist them.

It is clear that the RWA will start planning in 2006 for long term changes in Redfern Waterloo public housing. All those concerned about public and affordable housing should be looking for ways to ensure that the RWA plans work for the interest of public tenants and not just the interests of the NSW Government and the self funding RWA.

Geoff Turnbull - Redfern Eveleigh Darlington Waterloo Watch Group (REDWatch) - 7 March 2006

The REDWatch website [www.redwatch.com.au](http://www.redwatch.com.au) contains a wide range of documents relating to government plans for Redfern-Waterloo

## A Few Basic Figures on Redfern-Waterloo Public Housing

*This information is provided by Housing NSW and is based a Redfern-Waterloo sub-set of Housing NSW figures similar to those used state wide for their annual report.*

### THE PEOPLE

#### Who lives here?

	Number	% of tenants	% in NSW PH	% in NSW All
Aged over 60	na	53%	39%	17%
Aged under 16	674	11%	25%	22%
Single person	na	66%	49%	32%
Couple with children	75	2%	5%	
Single parent families	425	10%	19%	

Average Occupancy 1.45 people per property = 6017

#### How long do they live here?

	% of tenants	% in NSW PH
Lived here for more than 10 years	32%	32 %
Lived here for more than 5 years	57%	24%
Moved out last year	9%	(Lower than Public Housing generally)

#### What is their source of income?

Earned income	7%	
Centreline	91%	(28% Disability pension)

Average household income = \$337 pw \$17,500 pa

#### In Summary

- An older population
- Fewer children
- More single person households
- A stable group of tenants
- High proportion of people with a disability
- Very low incomes

#### How do Housing NSW expect it will change?

- Proportion of single people approved for public housing has declined slightly and will continue
- And the proportion of people in two person households will increase - one parent plus child
- The age of the public housing population is trending upwards
- The proportion of people with a disability will increase
- Long-term trend over last decade for public housing to focus on people with special needs will continue

### THE PROPERTIES

#### Public housing properties in Redfern-Waterloo

Redfern	1604 properties	29% of all housing in Redfern Compared to 6% in NSW
Waterloo	2536 properties	92% of all housing in Waterloo

House /Unit size	Bed sit	1 bed	2 bed	3 bed	3+ bed
Percentage of stock	9%	24%	52%	13%	2%

Homes in multi-unit properties not separately titled or serviced 90%  
Properties are young and have a long life left - 55% built 1970s or later

#### Mismatch between housing size supply and tenant demand. Comparison of stock and waiting list.

Bedroom category	34% (Bed Sit & 1 bed)	53% (2 Bed)	13% (3 Bed +)
Family Composition	54% (Singles)	42% (2-4 Persons)	4% (4+ persons)

### HOUSING NSW STRATEGIES FOR REDFERN WATERLOO

- To respond to the ageing population
- To continue to build the communities of Redfern and Waterloo
- To improve and sustain the accommodation
- To support people with mental health problems and their neighbours
- To address the mismatch between supply and demand

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