

<p style="text-align: center;">Redfern Waterloo NGO Consortium Response to the draft Redfern Waterloo Human Services Plan</p>

Background – about the Consortium

Small non-government community service providers who operate in the Redfern - Waterloo areas are in the process of forming a Consortium to work together and to represent small NGOs in the Redfern Waterloo area. In forming this consortium, we will value the diversity of the member small NGOs, while at the same time creating a mechanism for working together.

By doing this, we propose that the Consortium will:

- § Provide small NGOs with a voice to speak to stakeholders as a single voice. It will also be a single point for other organisations to come together and negotiate
- § Represent small NGOs on planning bodies and in local planning processes
- § Be a mechanisms to develop and deliver new programs or expand existing programs in a joint, cooperative way
- § Encourage local small NGOs to continue to deliver programs and services in a coordinated and planned way together, to avoid duplication
- § Create opportunities for small NGOs to work jointly with the large NGOs and locally based government services
- § Enable small NGOs to work together to make the best use of resources available and provide advice and input on future resource and premises models
- § Be an information clearinghouse for information and for resource sharing
- § To raise our profiles in the community
- § Help small NGOs understand community needs, including pooling data and sharing statistics and research that identify community needs

We believe that the Redfern - Waterloo NGO Consortium provides the mechanism for local control and tailor made solutions to reach agreed outcomes. This submission on the draft Human Services Plan for Redfern Waterloo has been developed by Consortium members.

General thrust of the Human Services Plan: outcomes

The Consortium supports the key outcomes of the draft Human Services plan as set out on page i of the Plan. As aspirational statements they are seen as appropriate to respond to what we understand are the complex issues in the Redfern - Waterloo

communities. They demonstrate some level of understanding of what are the most vulnerable groups in Redfern - Waterloo.

While supporting the outcomes in the Plan, the Consortium wishes to work with the Redfern - Waterloo Authority further on how the outcomes can be met, and wishes to take the initiative to design the processes for this in areas that small NGOs are involved in. We would like to see flexibility in the processes to be used to achieve these outcomes and also to participate in the process design.

General concern: the Plan not reflecting positive achievements

The draft plan does not reflect at all the wide range of initiatives, programs and partnerships that exist in Redfern - Waterloo already and that reflect the long term commitment of a wide range of agencies working in the area. It has a tone of criticism and for Indigenous groups has a tone that implies a 'mission management' approach and is considered racist and alienating.

We find it offensive that many positive and successful initiatives in the area have not been reflected or acknowledge in the plan. Things in the plan are already happening and there are also many exciting examples of integrated initiatives in the area and of programs and services that are designed to build community capacity in the area. These include initiatives such as:

- § The Community Safety Strategy, an excellent example of an integrated approach
- § The Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Community Justice Committee
- § The Waratah Education Program, a joint initiative between South Sydney Youth Service and Alexandria Park Community School.

We are concerned that the draft Human Services plan does not look at and learn from these examples of partnership and integration between services and that they are not publicised or celebrated. Small NGOs in the Redfern Waterloo area, as well as government agencies, are already looking at how to deal with these complex issues in Redfern Waterloo, yet there is no focus in the plan on any of the good work that has already been put in place. The lack of acknowledgement or recognition of these initiatives, and the way the Redfern Waterloo Authority is intervening is disempowering and alienating to both local service providers and to the community.

If the approach is designed to build local capacity, it would be more effective for the Redfern Waterloo Authority to support local service providers and agencies and facilitate and encourage these services to continue to work with local people.

Specific concerns about the proposed implementation of the Human Services Plan

Notwithstanding our support for the outcomes in the Draft Human Services plan, we do however have we have serious concerns in a number of areas about basis upon which the plan has been developed, in particular:

§ Research basis of the plan

The approach in the draft Plan, in particular the focus on a precinct approach is understood to be based on a research document that has as its basis a literature review. This research does not appear to reflect any evaluation of the models that are included in this literature review and upon which the premises of the plan are based. In addition, the Plan does not appear to build on the significant earlier work undertaken in Redfern - Waterloo by Morgan Disney and does not appear to have any link to the Morgan Disney report, notwithstanding the fact that some aspects of that report are considered incorrect.

§ Measurement of the outcomes

We are concerned that the Human Services Plan has no indication of how the outcomes are to be measured. Our questions are:

- § What are the indicators that will be used to measure whether the outcomes are being achieved?
- § What sort of benchmarks will be set?
- § What work is being done on how the outcomes are to be measured?

We also believe that if the outcomes are to be measured, we need a clearer picture of what the situation is now in Redfern Waterloo, with relevant information and data.

We also have concerns about several proposed aspects of the implementation of the Plan, in particular:

§ Resources

The implementation of the Human Services Plan requires significant resources. There have constantly been suggestions that there will be no new resources or funding for the area. This seems a contradiction in that achievement of the outcomes will not be possible without any new resources. The Plan indicates that all proposals are costed and funded, yet it seems

difficult to understand where the funds are coming from. We are concerned that the main recommendations in the plan relating to resources are around the establishment of the Charitable Trust. We are concerned how this Trust would attract resources required, and also that it may have no public accountability and that private donors may decide on how money is to be spent. We are concerned that the plan does not identify any new funds for the priority area and flag as Phase 2 of the planning process starts, that aged and disability, through HACC, is also an area that needs additional funding.

§ Improved referral

The Plan refers to improved referral mechanisms, which are supported in principle. However, at present the main issue in making referrals to a wide range of both non-government and government services in the community services and health fields is that they have insufficient resources and waiting lists. Unless resources are made available to improve service capacity in many areas, improved referral mechanisms will be of little use

Concern about the underpinning philosophy of the plan

The underpinning philosophy of the plan reflects all the current government buzz words and concepts. While it sets out clear imperatives for government, we are concerned about:

- § The concept of precincts – this appears to be related to social research and case studies but has not been related to Redfern Waterloo and does not make sense in Redfern Waterloo. It has not been developed in any form of consultative way, with the agencies involved in each precinct. There is some concern that the term ‘precinct’ really refers to a service. There is a need for more description of what a precinct really means, as it appears to have misinterpreted the cluster concept to improve service access and referrals, developed in the cluster meetings
- § The use of terms like ‘integration’ are threatening for small NGOs. In addition, there is confusion in the use of terms within the plan. It is not clear whether the term ‘integration’ when used in the draft Plan refer to co-location of agencies, amalgamation of agencies, new governance models or simply integration in service delivery, better coordination between services and improved referrals mechanisms. While we are not opposed to the latter, we have strong opposition to any forced amalgamation or forced collocation of small NGOs. As we have indicated else where in this document and in previous correspondence with the Redfern Waterloo Authority, we would like to see the emergence and development of models of so-called ‘integration’ emerging from the grass roots agencies and driven locally. Our newly forming Consortium is an

example of this, a locally driven and developing approach to cooperative working together on the ground.

- § Proposals to integrate back office functions. For most NGOs these are very under-resourced areas and operate on the 'smell of an oily rag', so it would be difficult to achieve any significant savings at all. Again, we would like to see any consideration of these issues driven locally and investigation being done locally, not from 'on high'. This approach, which seems to reflect the trend to e-government being seen today, appears to be more about what the government wants to see but does not reflect the approach that NGOs want to see.

Concerns about the implementation of the Plan

We have a series of questions which we believe need serious consideration prior to the implementation of the Plan:

- § Why does the Plan barely refer to the Department of Housing; DoH is a key lead agency in this area, yet it is barely referred to? As a key landlord in the area, it is important that DoH is able to give messages to people living in the area that they will not be asked to leave
- § Why have few of the initiatives from the Redfern Waterloo Partnership kept? Considerable resources were put into this process, all it seems to no end
- § How does the Redfern Waterloo Authority intend to resource the recommendations of the Plan? What process is proposed to resource them?
- § How will the Plan get government to work with NGOs in the area?
- § How does the Redfern Waterloo Authority propose to communicate with NGOs during the implementation?
- § How does the Redfern Waterloo Authority propose to communicate with the wider community?
- § How does the plan propose to address the need for appropriate facilities and physical infrastructure required to support concepts like the youth precinct, especially given that many facilities are Council owned?
- § How does the Redfern Waterloo Authority plan to work with the City of Sydney and how will effective communication on issues around the implementation of this plan be addressed?
- § Does the Redfern Waterloo Authority have detail about how this plan will be implemented?
- § Why does the implementation have such a focus on so many processes and task forces?

Commitment to the Plan?

We are concerned that while the Plan addresses priority issues in Redfern - Waterloo, and sets out many detailed strategies to address them, political processes will override the Plan and shape the real direction and social planning initiatives in the area. As an example of this, even during the four week consultation period for the draft Human Services Plan, Minister Frank Sartor announced the establishment of a National Centre of Excellence for Aboriginal Youth in the old public school in Redfern. Without commenting in the merits or otherwise of the proposal, it does not appear to fit within the three precincts for youth services as outlined in the plan.

This announcement also makes no reference to the impact of this proposed new centre on the existing community services operating from that location providing essential services to the local community. It does not seem clear how this new centre relates to the four or five other agencies all providing education and support to the Indigenous community in the area. There was no consultation on this proposal and there is concern about the impact of bringing an outside organisation in to the area. In Redfern - Waterloo there is a history of organisations coming in from outside the area but not having the linkages to engage with the local community; it is far harder for outside organisations to get people to respond to what they are offering. We believe it would be a far more effective – and cost effective – approach to better resource existing services who already have linkages into the communities in this area and who therefore have the capacity to work with people.

Comments on the process

§ The development of the Human Services Plan

The Consortium members are concerned that although significant time was made available by NGO's to participate in the cluster planning process, little of the outcome of those processes is in fact reflected in the draft Plan. Much time was put in by different agencies across Redfern Waterloo, but that seems wasted given the lack of clear relationship between the outcomes of the cluster groups process and the current draft Human Services Plan. The way the plan has been developed, and the consultation process referred to below, are demonstrations of a woeful attempt at communication. The reliance on websites for communication ignores the fact that many in these communities cannot access information that way either due to lack of access, English as a second language or low literacy.

§ the consultation process on the draft plan

We find it insulting that a plan of such significance for the Redfern Waterloo area has had such a short time for responses from the community and from service providers. It raises complex issues and the minimal four week turnaround time has not enabled time for informed discussion in the community. The haste with which meetings were arranged and the timing of the consultation with young people (at 9 am two days before submissions are due – and at a time when young people would either be at school or are unlikely to be about) makes the consultation process seem little more than a token gesture.

We also understand that the Plan has been signed off by the Human Services CEOs, and given this there seems little point in commenting.

§ the consultation process for Phase 2

We would like to see a more inclusive process for consulting with agencies in Phase 2 that focuses on identifying key outcomes for these target groups but leaves the development of the process for achieving the outcomes to service providers and groups like our Consortium.

About how the Consortium could be involved: an alternative way forward

The Redfern - Waterloo NGO Consortium wishes to work with the Redfern - Waterloo Authority to develop strategies to achieve the outcomes in the Human Services Plan for Redfern - Waterloo. We welcome the opportunity to identify mechanisms to achieve these outcomes and to work cooperatively within our group and in partnership with other agencies towards achieving them

We believe that this locally driven approach based on building on cooperative working arrangements and based on small local NGOs creating a consortium to work together more cooperatively to achieve outcomes that will benefit these communities and address issues that have been identified in the draft Redfern Waterloo Human Services Plan. This approach would have a number of benefits:

- § It recognises that small NGOs already do a lot of cooperative service delivery and forming a consortium would enable this to be formalized and developed further
- § Forming a consortium will provide a structure that can be used to address current issues and threats, with small NGO supporting each other and speaking as one voice on issues

- § Forming a consortium will enable small NGOs to respond to future Expressions of Interest for funding, not only having greater capacity to attract resources than agencies operating alone but also providing opportunities for proposals to include creative and innovative models of service provision based on cooperative working arrangements
- § Creating a consortium will also provide NGOs to work together to meet outcomes that the Redfern Waterloo Authority want through its Human Services planning, but in a way that is driven from the grassroots and is responsive to community needs and interests. It provides us with an alternative approach to NGOs working together and with government agencies, to offer to the Redfern Waterloo Authority. It also provides an alternative model for how resources and funds in the Redfern Waterloo area may be most efficiently used.

**SUPPORT AND ENDORSEMENT OF THE REDFERN-WATERLOO
NGO CONSORTIUM SUBMISSION ON THE DRAFT REDFERN
WATERLOO HUMAN SERVICES PLAN**

The following organisation supports and endorses the submission on the draft Redfern Waterloo Human Services Plan prepared by the Redfern-Waterloo NGO Consortium:

Name of organisation:

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Address:

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Contact details:

Phone:

E-mail:

Person signing on behalf of the organisation:

Name:

Position in organisation:

Signature:

Date: