



Council of Social Service of New South Wales

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Mr Aldo Pennini
Director
Reforming Human Services
Redfern Waterloo Authority
PO Box 3332
Redfern NSW 2016

Dear Aldo

I refer to the **draft Redfern Waterloo Human Services Plan** that is currently the subject of community consultation.

The Council Of Social Service of NSW (NCOSS) is pleased to be a participant in the development of a longer term vision and strategies for the urban renewal and community development of the Redfern Waterloo areas through our membership of the Human Services Ministerial Advisory Committee (HSMAC) and through discussion with many local non government human services organizations which form an integral part of the local services system in the areas.

NCOSS wishes to provide the following comments on the draft Plan for the Authority's and NSW Government consideration.

General comments

As previously indicated to the RWA and Minister Sartor, a preferable starting point would have been the development of a draft vision for what Redfern Waterloo might be in 20 years time, followed by the establishment of a renewal and regeneration framework, in which the individual plans could have then be developed and implemented.

Strengthening the adequacy and effectiveness of the Redfern Waterloo network of Government, not for profit and for profit human services is an important objective, but, of itself, will not secure better living standards and quality of life for low and modest income residents of the areas, now and in 20 years time.

Alignment

It is critical that the RWA widely consults and develops economic development and community infrastructure plans that this draft human services plan can fully align with.

Setting targets

To this end, the RWA and the NSW Government must establish clear targets for improvements in each of the 10 draft priorities, over the first three and then subsequent years of the Plan.

These targets should then be directly related to the priorities and actions emanating from the draft economic development and infrastructure plans when they are released for public consultation.

Evaluation

Where baseline data and evidence exist for each of the 10 priority objectives, this should be made readily available so that the Redfern and Waterloo communities can make judgments along the way about the performance of the key actions in achieving positive results over time.

As with some of the more effective urban renewal projects in comparable locations in other OECD nations, the RWA and the NSW Government should commit to financing an independent evaluation of the effectiveness of the overall Redfern Waterloo Plan and its components such as this draft Human Services plan.

NCOSS believes that the HSMAC should be requested to advise on such an evaluation strategy as soon as possible in early 2006, so that the scope and methodology of the evaluation are resolved as phase 2 of the Plan is considered by Government in mid 2006.

Priority areas

As a member of the HSMAC, we can confirm that the 10 priority objectives outlined in the draft plan are an appropriate reflection of discussions held in the cluster groups and within the HSMAC itself.

However, it will be critical that in phase two of consulting and working up this Plan, that equal emphasis is given to the critical factors shaping the lives and needs of older people, people with disabilities, people from CALD backgrounds and that significant portion of these local communities dependent upon affordable private rental, public and community housing.

Resources

Although the 2004 Morgan Disney report suggested that enough resources, through a combination of Government and non government service delivery activities, existed in Redfern and Waterloo, there was no attempt made in that report to compare the adequacy of service presence and the effectiveness of service provision with other similar locations nor State wide averages.

Whilst the draft Plan clearly outlines changes to the provision of different clusters of services, especially youth services, it also recommends actions under some of the 10 priority areas that will inevitably require an increased resource commitment, over several years, to achieve the objective. This cannot be done by simply creating greater efficiencies in the existing “back offices” of service providers.

The development of the Plan has not focused on providing the criteria for abolishing or reducing a significant level of existing service provision that could be arguably used to fund some of these priorities.

If such an approach is being considered, then it must be honestly placed on the table as part of the implementation negotiations with the clusters of services and the specific Government funding agencies that are involved. These negotiations would also have to include adequately funded transition assistance for the organizations which would be affected.

Implementation roles

The draft plan outlines a structural set of arrangements for implementation. Whilst the HSMAC retains the role of providing some oversight of the process and advice to Minister Sartor and the RWA, it is the Senior officers Group, currently comprised of officers from State Government agencies, which will drive the process in conjunction with the RWA team.

NCOSS recommends that a representative of the Commonwealth agencies active in Redfern and Waterloo, a representative of the City of Sydney Council and two representatives (one Aboriginal) of the local non government sector are added to the SOG for the purposes of implementing the Plan.

Specific comments

(i) additional affordable child care places

This is an urgent need that must be addressed as part of the priorities to improve the quality of life and resilience of vulnerable families and children in Redfern and Waterloo. NCOSS believes that Governments, NSW and Commonwealth must deliver on their responsibilities in this critical area of core human services provision. The creation of 100 extra child care places is and should not be the responsibility of a corporate donor.

DOCS should be asked to provide options for funding these additional places, through a combination of increased subsidies to pre schools, specific recurrent funding through the new Early Intervention Program and by negotiation with the Commonwealth about extra family day care and long day care places in these two areas.

(ii) enhanced support for vulnerable people

Whilst improvements to case management and care coordination practices between agencies is supported, there is a desperate need to ensure that extra resources are provided in Redfern and Waterloo through the Joint Guarantee of Service and the HASI programs. New mental health prevention initiatives must be funded in these areas as part of the NSW Government's stated commitment to improve prevention and rehabilitation in mental health services generally across NSW.

(iii) increase numbers of young people accessing employment and training

Whilst young Aboriginal people have a priority through the proposed elements of the Aboriginal Employment Strategy, there are several other groups of young people and mature aged people in the areas that are either long term unemployed or employed in low paid, low

skill part time and full time jobs who deserve a focus with skills development and more sustainable job opportunities.

NCOSS believes that the RWA should commence discussions with community enterprise bodies like Social Ventures Australia about the potential of business mentoring and venture capital support for small enterprise in the Redfern Waterloo areas. In addition, the RWA and the City of Sydney should consider introducing an employment and training plan requirement for all major new developers/employers entering the areas that requires them to provide opportunities to those disadvantaged already in the local labour market.

(iv) community capacity building

NCOSS supports proposals in the draft Plan to re energise Redfern through Main Street style rejuvenation, the conduct of a Redfern Festival and references to genuinely assisting local NGOs improve their “back office” capacities.

We also believe that the opportunity should be taken by the RWA to institute a program of community leadership projects and to also work with existing local groups to develop a stronger E-community across the areas.

Benefits for low income households would be achieved through supporting the establishment of a No Interest Loans Scheme in Redfern and Waterloo to assist such households purchase energy and water efficient whitegoods.

The Indigenous Land Corporation’s proposals for building and operating several Aboriginal sporting and cultural activities from the Redfern Public School site will hopefully provide a catalyst for building community pride and strength for aboriginal non government organizations in the area.

(v) a Redfern Waterloo Foundation?

In many disadvantaged urban renewal areas of Australia and in comparable OECD cities, vehicles have been successfully established to encourage and direct funds provided by corporations and high net worth individuals who are interested in social and community development.

Some of the key elements of this approach include:

- For relevant tax concessions the Foundation must be a not for profit entity with appropriate objectives and governance arrangements;
- To maximize potential donor interest, the Foundation should preferably be operated by interests representative of the key stakeholder constituencies in the targeted community and not directly by Government;
- The charter of the Foundation should be to identify and support locally generated economic and social development initiatives that complement and not duplicate existing services, activities and responsibilities of Government in particular;
- The Foundation may also provide a focus for brokering skills and other resources into local community projects, frequently in partnership with other bodies specialist in these types of initiatives.

NCOSS is interested in assisting with further development of this concept and would also suggest an early engagement with bodies like Philanthropy Australia and the embryonic Greater Sydney Community Foundation.

(vi) a Redfern Waterloo Affordable Housing Strategy

Whilst NCOSS appreciates that the human services needs of homeless people, public and low income private rental housing tenants will be addressed as part of Phase 2 of the Plan, it is abundantly clear that a comprehensive affordable housing strategy will be required to ensure that the Redfern Waterloo of 2015-2020 is not characterized by a significant reduction in the numbers of low and modest income households.

Put simply, the RWA and the City of Sydney Council, with the backing of the Minister for Planning, must ensure through means like inclusionary zoning, new investment vehicles, targeted tax concessions, affordable housing targets, social housing expansion and strategic use of Government assets that affordable housing accounts for 25% -30% of all housing in these suburbs in 10 years time.

Neither the Redfern Waterloo Act, nor the current charter of the RWA, give a clear priority to this outcome. This is a deficit that must be addressed at the front end of the Redfern Waterloo Plan process. A failure by the current NSW Government to manage market forces effectively for these types of affordable housing outcomes will irreparably damage a huge portion of the current local communities and their children.

A Redfern Waterloo Affordable Housing strategy is much more than resolving the current impasse over the redevelopment of the Block, although the appropriate resolution of this issue is a priority.

I hope that these comments are useful in the finalization of this piece of the Redfern Waterloo Human Services Plan. If further information is required, please contact me on tel 9211 2599 or email at gary@ncoss.org.au

Yours sincerely

Gary Moore
Director