



# THE SETTLEMENT

## NEIGHBOURHOOD CENTRE

ABN 82 823 463 641

Endorsed as an Income Tax Exempt Charity and a Deductible Gift Recipient under the name 'Sydney University Settlement'

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*'Celebrating our 80<sup>th</sup> year in Edward St'*

9 March 2006

Mr Aldo Pennini,  
Director Reforming Human Services  
Redfern Waterloo Authority

Dear Aldo,

The Settlement Neighbourhood Centre will not be providing a detailed submission on the Draft Human Services Plan for the following reasons:

1. The time frame for responses is inappropriate for democratic organisations, especially those, like the Settlement, which have volunteer management committees. Government agencies dealing with NGO's should begin by respecting their work and governance structures, rather than allowing themselves unlimited time and expertise to prepare reports, leaving none for preparation of responses.
2. The Draft Plan wrongly confines its attention and language to the "efficient" provision of "services". The Settlement takes an altogether broader view, which recognizes the importance of services, but also the social and physical landscape of our district, and its vibrant mix of communities. We also see:
  - communities and groups which are sites of historical and cultural identity;
  - communities and groups which are capable, self-determining, autonomous yet collaborative;
  - communities and groups which are sites of dissent and resistance.
3. When we talk about Redfern-Waterloo we are not merely talking about best ways of delivering commodities ("services") in a market place, we are talking about challenging and transforming the context for the benefit of all. The Settlement supports a society of social justice, and we expect from the RWA a serious challenge to the privileging arrangements which run along lines of race, class, wealth, gender,

age, disability and sexual orientation, and which result in the present inequalities in health, housing, education, employment, law.

4. The Plan leaps to the conclusion, uncritically and resting unsoundly on one research document (which also confines itself to the language of “services”), that “integration of services” will produce improvements. There is almost no examination of the value of diverse provision in a diverse and changing community, and no examination of unifying strategies that are not based on location – alternatives to the precinct model.
5. We have been told that no substantial changes will be made to the Report. Dropping everything to respond to the major defects of this Plan when we know none will be rectified is hardly good time management
6. We have been told that the end result of the implementation of this Plan will be the “better management” of around \$2million per year, the majority of which comes from the disbandment of the Street Team. Even if major benefits could derive from this restructure, the percentage gain in dollars or services will be infinitesimal in comparison with unmet need in our area. We are better off, in our view, getting on with the job in hand than responding to a Plan with such paltry intent.
7. In our view this Draft Plan should have commenced with an objective assessment of the immense unmet need in our area, and a frank admission by Government of the extent of its ability to meet it. Instead, the Plan consists of the compulsory “restructure” of services delivered by NGO’s, the goodwill and volunteer effort of which the Government relies on, and vague, motherhood-style statements of intent by government agencies that have no new funds, staff or facilities to implement them, or publicly accountable reporting.
8. The Plan is a band-aid over a gaping wound at best, scapegoating of the hard-pressed volunteer sector at worst. We expected better after all the hype produced to justify the passage of the Redfern Waterloo Authority Bill.

The Settlement has a century-long tradition of both independence and cooperation. We will work with any government or non-government agency to improve services to the disadvantaged of our area. We will support changes to the organisation of service delivery where they can be proved to bring genuine improvement. But we will oppose any moves to “rationalise” services when this means loss of the ability to design and get funding for tailored programs for particular (sometimes quite small) groups. We will work against “one stop shops” where that means “one size fits all”. We will continue to assert that the RWA has been given immense powers to improve the life opportunities of people living in some of the greatest concentrations of disadvantage in the country, and has so far failed to produce a Plan capable of making more than a cosmetic difference.

Yours truly,

Lyn Turnbull, Secretary,  
The Settlement Management Committee