

15. See, for example, D McKnight, *Australia's Spies and their Secrets*, 1994; R Hall, *The Secret State*, 1978; F Cain, *The Origins of Political Surveillance in Australia*, 1983; F Cain, *ASIO, an Unofficial History*, 1994; J Hocking, *Beyond Terrorism, The Development of the Australian Security State*, 1993; Commonwealth of Australia, *Royal Commission on Intelligence and Security: Fourth Report*, vols 1 and 2 (1977).

its establishment in 1949, ASIO has been used by successive governments, Labor and conservative alike, to monitor, disrupt and harass a wide range of political opponents, including Labor Party members, trade unionists, anti-war activists, students and socialists.¹⁵ Under the banner of the 'war on terrorism' such operations are again being legitimised and deepened. As is often the case, the most vulnerable members of society — such as asylum seekers — have become the initial targets for the types of measures that could be

used more broadly against those expressing political dissent. The reprehensible detention of Mohammed, and the contemptuous response of Ruddock and ASIO to its exposure, is a warning in this regard.

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DEVELOPMENT

Redfern–Waterloo's 'shake up' call

REBECCA LISLE reports on the adoption of a development corporation model in the Redfern–Waterloo Authority (NSW) and the implications for a residential community.

REFERENCES

1. Houghton Mifflin & Co, *The American Dictionary of the English Language* (4th ed, 2000).
2. The Minister for Redfern–Waterloo reported that 'Gentrification of Redfern is well advanced and is increasing in Waterloo. This is seen by some as a threat to the social mix of the area and unless well planned, creates the potential for further worsening between levels of relative advantage and disadvantage across socio-economic groups'. Redfern–Waterloo Partnership Project, *Human Services Review #2* (2004).
3. This is generally reflected in the activities of community action groups like REDwatch, which has been actively involved in making its concerns known to government and to parliament.
4. The Australian Technology Park 2004 Annual Report shows that in 2003 the Park reported a loss of \$4.197 million, and in 2004 a loss of \$4.964 million. Although the Park enjoyed a rent-free deal with its former owner the SHFA worth \$14.4 million, it failed to repay SHFA \$47.2 million dollars in loans.

Gen-tri-fi-ca-tion n the restoration and upgrading of deteriorated urban property by middle class or affluent people, often resulting in displacement of lower income people.¹

The Redfern–Waterloo Authority (RWA) has been charged with the responsibility to facilitate and manage the process of gentrification in Sydney's Redfern and Waterloo.² The RWA's primary task will be development of the built environment, involving responsibility to, among other things, sell government-owned land, forge joint-venture partnerships with the private sector, introduce 'housing choice', and devise the Redfern–Waterloo Plan. The RWA will also be responsible for taking ownership of Australian Technology Park.

This Brief discusses community concerns about the RWA, and the potential implications for residents of Redfern and Waterloo, particularly the Indigenous and other disadvantaged communities.

The 'development corporation' model

The RWA is modelled on the Sydney Harbour Foreshore Authority, the Sydney Olympic Park Authority and the Darling Harbour Authority.

Although the RWA has the potential to realise positive change, the adaptation of this model in residential communities must be challenged. Redfern and Waterloo are largely residential communities with complex social challenges, as opposed to those to which the model is suited, being primarily commercial, industrial and entertainment precincts.

The fact that Redfern and Waterloo are vibrant residential communities with a unique and diverse concentration of needs is not lost on the NSW Government. That fact was labored, and the statistics discussed at length in the second reading speeches in both houses. Oddly, the solution to the area's 'social

challenges' is said to lie in improving infrastructure and developing a real estate plan.

The thrust of the *Redfern–Waterloo Authority Act 2004* ('the Act') is the creation of a new scheme in which planning and development decisions are made under the authority of one Minister, with no guaranteed community consultation, and without the constraints of normal planning controls and processes.

Instead, decisions affecting the community will be made according to an overarching strategy (the as yet unspecified Redfern–Waterloo Plan), devised by the Minister and Board of Authority (as appointed by the Minister). In the absence of community participation and ownership of this 'Plan', the strategy would potentially amount to nothing more than the imposition of a vision that current residents do not have and did not ask for.

The model also fails to incorporate processes that guarantee transparency. Instead, it empowers the RWA to engage in activity with the private sector, including forming private corporations and acquiring interests in private corporations. In relation to State Significant Development, the RWA has a number of roles (developer, planner, financier and regulator), which cannot plausibly be carried out without the relative interests conflicting. Coupled with the lack of guaranteed consultation, the communities are (not surprisingly) nervous about the concentration of power and unilateral authority in the hands of the RWA and the Minister.³

The RWA will also take ownership of the Australian Technology Park, including its financial liabilities.⁴ The Government aims to have money from the Redfern–Waterloo Fund invested in developing the Park as a centre for medical technology, thereby bringing employment and prosperity to the area.

This agenda raises real concerns about the potential for funds raised through the sale of public assets to be diverted away from community renewal projects and instead used to prop up the financial position of the Park.

The potential implications for residents of Redfern and Waterloo

The NSW Government has made a 10-year commitment to Redfern and Waterloo. The plan it seems is to untangle the millions of dollars spent on human services, to create more jobs in the area (presumably for locals), and to upgrade infrastructure.

Human Services

The Minister for Redfern–Waterloo will have final approval in relation to all NSW government funding that is allocated to human services within Redfern and Waterloo under the 10-year Plan.

A Human Services Implementation Working Group will be established by the end of January 2005. Its objective is to come up with a plan for the co-ordinated delivery of human services in the area, due to be presented to Cabinet in May 2005.

How the plan will impact the provision of human services in the area is not entirely clear, however it is foreseeable that it will require agencies to work together, and may see the closure of services which provide duplicate or overlapping services. This may impact how members of the community access human services, particularly as to choice and protecting privacy.

Jobs

The Minister intends to put in place a comprehensive jobs plan for the area, involving the creation of additional jobs, and helping locals overcome barriers to entering the labour market.

If this can be achieved it will obviously have quite positive implications for those in the area who genuinely desire to enter the labour market. An aspect of the jobs plan that needs to be put on the agenda is addressing welfare dependency, as distinct from unemployment.

Infrastructure

With a view to managing the process of gentrification in the Redfern and Waterloo communities, the Minister has indicated that priority will be given to the following projects:

- works to upgrade Redfern Station
- development of a town centre with commercial and retail activity
- redevelopment of the Block in consultation with the Aboriginal Housing Company (AHC)
- investigating the renewal of public housing estates.

The potential southward expansion of the CBD remains a possibility, particularly as the re-development of Redfern station is seen as a catalyst for the growth of commercial activity in the area.⁵

At this stage there are plans to make more plans. Most of the plans appear likely to be devised in the first half of 2005, therefore (consistent with the manner in which the Act was introduced) there is little time

for the community to get their head around what is happening, and to participate effectively.

Because of its proximity to Redfern station 'the Block' will inevitably be affected by the upgrade works. The Indigenous community has expressed its concern over plans for the future of the community, and whilst acknowledging the need for positive change, is worried that the RWA could undermine the work currently being carried out by community organisations, such as the AHC.

Although the Minister has acknowledged the significance of the Block to the Indigenous community, and stated that the RWA has 'no intention' to compulsorily acquire the Block, it does have a clear intention to redevelop the Block. At present no plans have been made public but the RWA is apparently in talks with the AHC. Mooted plans for the Block include creation of an Aboriginal business hub, and renewal of Indigenous housing.

The Minister has undertaken not to reduce the number of Indigenous homes in Redfern and Waterloo; however, no specific mention has been made of keeping Indigenous housing numbers at the Block. The Minister also gave an undertaking to consult with the Indigenous community in good faith.

This might provide some level of comfort to residents of the Block, particularly in relation to ownership, management and control of their land, and the provision of ongoing housing in the area. Nonetheless, there is a sense that the community remains unconvinced.

Similarly, in relation to public housing the Minister stated that the RWA has no plans to redevelop any public housing at this time. He has also stated that there are no plans to reduce the amount of public housing in the area, and that all tenancies are secure.

However, the Minister has made clear that the RWA will investigate renewal of the public housing estates, and has spoken of public/private partnerships for the provision of better housing options in the area. Public housing tenants, therefore, remain deeply concerned about the uncertainty surrounding the future of their homes.

The public housing community held a protest rally shortly before the passing of the Act, in December 2004. The rally reflected a lack of trust in the government's approach to community renewal, and fears that public housing tenants would be moved out of the area. The fact that the RWA has the power under the Act to sell, demolish and re-develop public assets serves only to further undermine public confidence, despite government assurances to the contrary.

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5. Redfern–Waterloo Chamber of Commerce (Media Release, 29 November 2004).