

Final Report

**Progressing the Pathways to  
Prevention Project in Redfern and  
Waterloo**

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October 2002



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## 1. The purpose and structure of this report

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The NSW and Commonwealth Governments have combined forces to improve early intervention approaches to crime prevention in the inner-Sydney suburbs of Redfern and Waterloo, through initiatives that target children and young people under the age of 14 and their families.

The 'Redfern-Waterloo Pathways to Prevention Project' was initiated and is being managed by the Crime Prevention Division of the NSW Attorney General's Department, with funds from the Crime Prevention Branch of the Commonwealth Attorney-General's Department. RPR Consulting was engaged to conduct a community consultation process to inform the development and implementation of the project.

The bulk of the consultation was undertaken in July and August 2002. It involved the collection of relevant service and demographic data, and interviews with representatives of community services, government agencies, parents, children and young people who work and live in the area.

The findings of this stage of the consultation process were consolidated in an Interim Issues Paper, released in late August. (*See Attachment 1.*) It provided an overview of the community's demographic characteristics and a more detailed demographic profile (*see Appendix 3 of the Issues Paper*), and summarised the views of respondents regarding:

- the main factors in the lives of children and young people in Redfern-Waterloo which could place them at risk of developing problematic behaviours, including involvement in crime;
- the times or points at which it is particularly important to build protections around children and their families, especially those who are most at risk;
- the current gaps or inadequacies in supports and protections in the Redfern-Waterloo service system.

The Issues Paper also:

- outlined other relevant initiatives in the area with which this project will need to mesh;
- provided 'service profiles' of 24 key non-government agencies operating in the area (*see Appendix 2 of the Issues Paper*).

The Interim Issues Paper was distributed to all who had participated in the individual or group interviews. (*See Appendix 1 of the Issues Paper* for a full listing.) Its purpose was to provide feedback and input for the second component of the consultation process – a forum on 13 September 2002 which brought together over 40 community representatives to discuss the implementation phase of the project.

This Final Report (which should be read in conjunction with the Interim Issues Paper as it does not repeat the material in that document) summarises the community's views as expressed at that forum, and sets out the recommendations of RPR Consulting, on the key outstanding issues, namely:

- the protective factors that should be bolstered for children and young people in Redfern and Waterloo at this particular point in time by this particular project – as identified by forum participants (*Section 2*);
- the principles that should inform both the selection and development of initiatives – as agreed by forum participants and recommended by RPR; (*Section 3*);
- the broad strategies that should be pursued, with relative weightings given by forum participants (*Section 4*);
- the mechanisms through which the Project and its initiatives should be developed, implemented and monitored – as suggested by most forum participants and recommended by RPR (*Section 5*);
- some recommendations regarding the general conduct of the Project in the implementation phase, and suggestions for types of initiatives that should be considered – proposed by RPR Consulting for the consideration of the Project Manager and (if deemed appropriate) the Reference Group (*Section 6*).

## 2. Priority protective factors for Redfern-Waterloo

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As indicated in the Interim Paper, progressing the Pathways Project in Redfern-Waterloo required more thinking about the particular protective factors that do or could help children and young people withstand the many risks in their environments. This element of strategic thinking is particularly important given the fact that many risk factors are difficult to eliminate or dilute. Consequently:

‘It is especially important then to identify protective factors and mechanisms that are likely to inhibit the development of anti-social behaviour and divert children to the pathways that lead towards positive outcomes.’<sup>1</sup>

It is also important to focus on building multiple protective factors, rather than just one or two, given that the research evidence indicates that protective factors (just like risk factors) operate cumulatively – the more protective factors around the child or young person, the lower the risk of anti-social or offending behaviour. While Forum participants were therefore asked to prioritise the protective factors they considered to be especially important in the Redfern-Waterloo community, they were asked to do so across a number of inter-locking domains (the individual child, the family situation and dynamics, the school environment, broader community and cultural contexts, and the life cycle or significant life events).

Through the use of a tool called ‘Paper Talk’, participants identified the following protections as being particularly important for children and young people in Redfern and Waterloo. It should be noted that many of them, within as well as between each of the five domains, are inter-connected.

### Individual Child

- *A strong sense of self-worth and self-esteem*, including having:
  - a belief that they can ‘make things happen’, that they’re not helpless
  - a foundation of good nutrition and health
  - a capacity for resilience
  - opportunities to succeed at anything that’s positive.
  
- *Connections within and beyond the family*<sup>2</sup>, including having:

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<sup>1</sup> National Crime Prevention (1999) *Pathways to Prevention: Developmental and early intervention approaches to crime in Australia*. National Crime Prevention, Attorney-General’s Department: Canberra. Page 137.

<sup>2</sup> Note: More participants identified these types of connections and relationships as having an important impact on the resilience of the individual child than any other factor.

- a sense of ‘attachment’
  - some responsibilities within the family and the community
  - friends and a constructive peer group
  - brothers and sisters
  - adults around that give support and that can be trusted
  - mentoring by people outside the family.
- *Opportunities to develop good living skills and to learn from challenges, including:*
    - developing physical skills and problem solving abilities
    - learning how to set personal goals and to work for their realisation
    - being given chances to engage in positive risk-taking activities
    - having someone to help them address negative behaviours in a supportive way.

### **Family environment**

- *Effective parenting, in terms of:*
  - both the skills/competency of the parents, and the love/care they transmit
  - parents having access to positive guidance and role modelling.
- *Supported parents (so that they can be supportive of their children in turn), including:*
  - Practical support such as having sufficient financial resources; job and training opportunities; stable accommodation; support from other family members (with grandparents being particularly important in this community); opportunities for holidays/time out from the area.
  - Emotional and other support such as having access to long-term relationships that are helpful; strong community connections; access to information and services when they are needed.
- *Stable home life, providing:*
  - safety and sense of security
  - the foundation for consistent and reliable care.

### **School context**

- *Maintaining a physical connection to school, through:*
  - regular school attendance
  - completing secondary school
  - strong family support for schooling
  - congruence between home and school in supporting learning and development.
- *Responsive and supportive schools, including:*

- acknowledging and responding to children’s behaviour at school as an indication of what is happening in their lives more generally
- alternative styles of education to meet different needs
- extra-curriculum activities for under-achievers
- sound school policies and practices based on children’s needs for safety and security, love and belonging, self respect and respect of others, self-actualisation
- careful planning of school environments (both classrooms and playgrounds) for the optimal empowerment of children in their development
- having small community-connected schools, in which parents are partners in the education of their children.

### **Life cycle/significant life events**

- *Good crisis intervention and support systems*
- *Skilled people and services to assist both parents and children to deal with grief and anger, given the particularly high levels of trauma in this community*
- *More recognition of the importance of ‘rites of passage’ (so that boys have some marker of the move towards adulthood other than juvenile detention or jail, and girls have some marker other than early motherhood).*

### **Community and cultural factors**

- *Respectful community relationships, including:*
  - respect, appreciation and understanding of cultural and family diversity, in both the community generally and in the design and delivery of services
  - treating children and young people with respect
  - building relationships across different groups/parts of the community
  - helping Aboriginal children and young people develop a strong ‘connection to culture’.
- *General sense of safety and security in the community, including through:*
  - having safe houses for children and young people
  - encouraging children and families to become involved in as many community networks and organisations as possible to build up a sense of connection and mutual responsibility.
- *Adequately funded and appropriate community services, especially those that can provide:*
  - employment and training opportunities for parents
  - educational support for very young mothers
  - early drug intervention support

- fair access to the justice system
- resources/activities that meet peoples' needs and interests
- health information and services.

These protective factors identified by community representatives as being particularly important in the Redfern-Waterloo community gel well with the research evidence and should guide the selection and development of initiatives in the implementation phase of the Pathways Project.

### 3. Principles to guide the development and implementation of initiatives

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Forum participants considered a set of draft principles (developed by the consultants from the views expressed during the individual interviews) to guide the development and implementation of specific initiatives throughout the life of the Pathways to Prevention Project in Redfern- Waterloo. There was general endorsement of the draft, but participants also suggested additions and amendments that have been incorporated in the re-drafted principles set out below.

**In seeking to intervene early for crime prevention purposes in Redfern and Waterloo, priority should be given to developmental initiatives that:**

- **build trusting, secure and helpful relationships and connections** – within families, between families and local services, amongst neighbours, and across different groups and services in the community;
- **recognise the unique position and rights of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people deriving from their status as Australia’s ‘First Peoples’** – as well as the continuing trauma and impact of the policy of forced removals on Aboriginal families;
- **identify the specific strengths in the local community** – and work from these strengths to improve the general quality of neighbourhood life;
- **encourage and support the involvement of children, young people and parents in decisions and actions** – so they can take greater control over their own lives and environments;
- **make real connections with local residents** – especially those who are often overlooked or discounted but have much to contribute;
- **are grounded in research evidence** – regarding the times and ways that interventions are likely to be most effective;
- **facilitate mutual support, responsibility and learning** – especially between people in the same boat;
- **reach out to the most isolated and vulnerable children, young people and families** – rather than responding only if they come to formal services;

- **recognise that families from different cultural backgrounds operate differently and have specific needs** – but also increase understanding across cultures;
- **strengthen existing support services and networks that are already operating effectively** – by ensuring they have adequate core funds, facilities and equipment;
- **encourage collaboration with other relevant programs and initiatives** – to produce a more coordinated and integrated service system, without the imposition of centralisation or uniformity;
- **have the most chance of producing sustainable outcomes and making a lasting difference in peoples' lives** – because they are well-thought out, adequately resourced, and widely and actively supported by local people and agencies;
- **will share their successes and problems, and evaluate their outcomes** – so that they and others can learn from their experiences;
- **are willing to change what they do and how they do it** – if research evidence or the results being achieved indicates this is necessary.

## **4. Broad strategies to achieve the goals**

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After identifying the protective factors they were seeking to put in place and developing the guiding principles, participants were asked to consider the various action strategies to achieve the project's aims that had been suggested by different people during the individual interviews. The strategies had been written on large wall charts and participants were given five paper dots to place against those they thought would be most effective and were most needed in the Redfern-Waterloo community. Participants were also invited to write up new strategies if they wished to have them considered.

In the listing below, the number in brackets indicates the number of 'votes' received by that particular strategy from amongst the 40 participants.

### **Strategies previously suggested during individual interviews**

- Maintain and extend services and programs that assist educational achievement (18)
- Provide more weekend activities for children and young people, and more flexible and affordable vacation care (18)
- Improve resourcing and support for facilities and staffing needs of existing services and agencies (15)
- Help parents and children/young people build better relationships with each other (14)
- Build a team of paid 'community catalysts' in the area, preferably residents (14)
- Support (existing) and build (new) mentoring programs for both parents and children/young people (13)
- Have more initiatives or programs that put children and young people in the driving seat/give them responsibility (11)
- Provide more opportunities for peer support and learning and for mutual/self help – for both parents and for children/young people (11)
- Provide more practical support to help parents with everyday problems/hardships (7)
- Focus more on general 'quality of life' issues than on 'problems' (5)

- Link one-off activities /events to on-going personal and skill development initiatives (3)
- Have more support for children's language development/conversation skills (0)

### **Other strategies added by participants**

- Support and work with cultural leaders in the community (20)
- Provide financial support for community members to start their own business, along the lines of the Grameen Bank<sup>3</sup> (6)
- Encourage all services to employ staff from the local community and provide support to these services so that can assist local residents to develop skills on the job (4)
- Put Redfern-Waterloo on the strategic map of the Sydney CBD as one of the oldest and most culturally rich areas (3)
- Have kids on management committees and boards (1)
- Have one information centre which shows people how to get assistance (1).

The implications of this prioritisation exercise should be taken into account in the development of concrete initiatives during the implementation phase of the Project.

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<sup>3</sup> The Grameen Bank commenced life in the mid-1970s as a project in a Bangladeshi village to provide small low interest loans to poor rural people so they could start their own income-generating enterprises. Transformed into an independent bank in 1983 (with borrowers owning 90% of the shares and the government the remaining 10%), it has flourished and the idea of 'micro-credit' has spread world-wide.

## 5. Process for progressing the project

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Despite already feeling overstretched, the majority view at the forum was that a special structure should be established to assist in the implementation of the Pathways to Prevention Project rather than using any of the existing structures in the area. The Project Manager from the NSW Crime Prevention Division who attended the Forum accepted this preference, as well as a number of other suggestions that were made.

In brief, it was agreed that a Pathways Reference Group should be established and should be comprised of around 8 to 10 people who live and/or work in Redfern-Waterloo. These will be people who:

- understand the various needs and concerns in the community;
- are knowledgeable about the networks and supports that currently exist; and
- are prepared to put time, thought and energy into developing proposals for the Project and assisting in their implementation.

People have been invited to contact the Project Manager if they wish to nominate themselves or another person for the Reference Group. In determining the final composition, the Project Manager was encouraged to ensure that the Reference Group:

- reflected the ethnic diversity of the community, and the diversity of service delivery agencies working there (both government and non-government); and
- had at least some people who are themselves members of the target groups (especially local parents).

The Reference Group's initial role will be to work with the Project Manager to develop proposals for the use of the Project's funds. There was general agreement that, in doing so, the Reference Group will be guided by the Principles agreed at the Forum, including in particular those that relate to building more positive connections between parents and children and to encouraging collaboration between agencies and networks.

It was also suggested (and RPR Consulting recommends) that the use of a competitive submission-based model for the allocation of funds should be avoided if at all possible as this runs counter to the Project's culture. Instead, a more developmental and collaborative approach should be taken in which the Reference Group:

- helps decide the best types of initiatives in this community to meet the broad goals of the Project (taking into account the nature and timing of other major projects and endeavours);
- identifies the services/networks/people that are relevant to each proposed initiative;
- brings together those services/networks/people and invites them to develop a plan for how the initiative could be achieved or delivered, preferably through a collaborative process (though this would not preclude different agencies from taking responsibility for different components);
- advises the Project Manager (who makes the final decision regarding funds allocation) as to whether or not the plan is feasible and likely to be effective.

Although this was not discussed at the Forum, RPR Consulting also recommends that the Reference Group be an active partner in the development of an evaluation strategy for the project as a whole.

Further, given another Pathways Project is underway in South Australia that has already done substantial work on this issue, RPR recommends that the Redfern-Waterloo Project seeks as many congruencies with that SA evaluation strategy as possible and appropriate. This would help build the Australian evidence base in terms of early intervention crime prevention work.

## **6. Attachments and appendices (*separately bound*)**

**Attachment 1                      Interim Issues Paper, September 2002**

The Interim Issues Paper incorporates the following appendices:

**Appendix 1                      List of agencies consulted**

**Appendix 2                      Service profiles**

**Appendix 3                      Demographic profile: Redfern & Waterloo**