

Interim Issues Paper

Redfern-Waterloo Pathways to Prevention Project

September 2002



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1 Background to the Project

1.1 Genesis of the 'pathways to prevention' approach

The Crime Prevention division was formed as part of the NSW Attorney General's Department in May 1996 and is the new South Wales Government's key agency for advice on crime prevention policy and programs. It considers a broad range of social issues such as health, education, housing and employment, which all have an effect on the amount and type of crime activity in the state.

Following the National Campaign Against Violence and Crime, the Commonwealth Government developed an initiative called National Crime Prevention aimed at 'developing and promoting ways of preventing violence, crime and fear in Australian communities'. The federal Attorney-General's Department is the lead agency and works collaboratively partnerships with other Commonwealth agencies, State, Territory and Local governments, community organisations and groups, the business sector, and research institutions.

One important component of this work was research conducted by an expert team (led by Professor Ross Homel of Griffith University) into developmental or early intervention approaches to crime prevention.¹ These approaches are quite different to addressing the problem of crime by a focus on law enforcement and punishment through strategies such as increasing police numbers and powers to intervene and legislating for harsher sentences.

The developmental approach focuses instead on identifying the complex and cumulative factors embedded in a young person's social, community and personal history – factors that either place them at risk of, or protect them against, the possibility of involvement in crime. Developmental approaches aim to intervene early, especially at critical points, to minimise the risks and maximise the protections so that the chances of a successful transition to adulthood are increased.

1.2 The Redfern-Waterloo initiative

In 2001, the Commonwealth sought expressions of interest from state governments to develop projects to implement developmental crime prevention initiatives. The NSW Crime Prevention Division submitted a proposal to develop a project in the inner Sydney suburbs of Redfern and Waterloo. The project aims to help this community to provide a greater range and more effective support to children aged 0 to 14 who are at risk and their families.

The project has two phases – consultation and implementation. This paper is part of the consultation phase and sets out the key issues that have emerged from collecting information and views from a range of key people and agencies in the area about:

¹ National Crime Prevention (1999) *Pathways to Prevention: Developmental and early intervention approaches to crime in Australia*. National Crime Prevention, Attorney-General's Department: Canberra

- the risk factors faced by children aged 0 to 14 in the Redfern-Waterloo neighbourhood that may undermine the development of their abilities and skills, adversely affect their life chances, and possibly lead to problematic behaviours including involvement in crime;
- the protective factors which do (or could) shield them from these risks and set them on a safer path to successful adulthood
- the most important times and ways to intervene to prevent problems emerging and to reduce the risks they face;
- 'early intervention' initiatives which would be helpful to the community.

During July and August 2002, RPR Consulting interviewed 93 people and convened two group discussions involving 25 people. Through this process, the consultants trawled the experiences of:

- 5 schools;
- 28 community services and organisations;
- 10 government agencies;
- 14 children and young people and 26 parents.

Appendix 1 sets out the list of schools, community and government agencies consulted.

The consultants acknowledge that this is only a small sample of parents and children. The original plan had been to conduct focus groups with children in schools but this was not permitted by the Education Department. We therefore decided to interview parents and children attending the Kids Fest on two consecutive Friday afternoons, and to place greatest emphasis on interviewing parents given there has recently been a survey of 130 young people between the ages of 8 and 18 conducted in the area.

The time frame made it impossible to interview all of the community organisations and services operating in the Redfern/Waterloo area. In any event, the project managers decided that the most important task was not to conduct a comprehensive audit of the services and programs available in the area; but rather to trawl workers' knowledge and experience regarding the risks facing children and young people and protective strategies to support them. While this approach did not necessitate interviewing all service providers, a very large proportion was individually interviewed and others were consulted in group settings. The opportunity was taken during the individual interviews to develop a simple 'service profile' setting out key features of the organisations and their work. These service profiles are attached as *Appendix 2*.

This brief Interim Issues Paper summarises the information and views gleaned to date and poses some issues for further discussion and clarification at a community forum. The forum provides another opportunity for key groups and agencies to have input before the consultants produce a final report to the Commonwealth and State Attorney Generals' Departments.

The final report will inform the second phase of the project in which the Commonwealth will provide around \$500,000 over two years to support existing or to kick-start new early intervention crime prevention initiatives which are community-based and undertaken in a collaborative manner by local services and people.

2 Redfern-Waterloo: community characteristics

2.1 Overview

The two inner Sydney suburbs of Redfern and Waterloo are part of the South Sydney Local Government Area (LGA) and lie just to the south of the Central Business District. Redfern covers 1.2 square kilometres, while Waterloo is larger at 1.9 square kilometres. While each has its distinct identity, the two neighbouring suburbs are often coupled for public policy purposes.

The area has many strengths.

- There is a strong sense of community spirit in many of the residents. A significant proportion of families have lived there for many years and have deep ties to the neighbourhood and its rich cultural history.
- This attachment is particularly evident amongst Indigenous residents who comprise a much higher proportion of the population than in other urban areas. Redfern was the birthplace of an Indigenous urban renaissance in the 1970s and is still a magnet to Aboriginal people from around the state.
- It is an extremely diverse community. In addition to the higher-than-usual presence of Indigenous Australians, there are large numbers of people from non-English speaking backgrounds. It is a remarkably tolerant community given this diversity.
- There is a significant number of community organisations and services, many with long histories and deep roots into the community. This makes for a very committed service system, which is backed up by a community-oriented Local Council.
- Its proximity to the CBD gives it advantages, or potential advantages, over many other urban communities.

The area also labours under the weight of extreme socio-economic disadvantage. Research by Professor Tony Vinson in 1999² found that, of the 578 postcode areas in NSW he studied, Waterloo ranked 22 in terms of disadvantage (one of only two urban postcodes in the top 30), and Redfern ranked 189 (with its lower ranking almost certainly accounted for by its significant pockets of gentrification).

- Poverty levels are high, with a significant proportion of the population being long-term unemployed people, sole parents or aged pensioners – all of whom are largely reliant on social security payments.
- The density of public housing is also very high, especially in Waterloo. While this was once a positive, the tighter targeting of public housing in the past two decades means

² Tony Vinson (1999) *Unequal in Life : the distribution of social disadvantage in Victoria and New South Wales*, Jesuit Social Services, Sydney.

that a very large number of people with high support needs are now concentrated in the area. 60% of all public housing allocations are “priority” allocations (that is, people with serious or multiple problems), compared to 25% of the allocations in Western Sydney.

- Many of these public housing tenants do not have strong personal or family support networks. This is a particular problem for sole parents who are over-represented in the area.
- There is a significant and growing incidence of drug and alcohol abuse which is producing serious and very visible problems, ranging from individual health problems and neglect of children to community concerns about safety and crime.

2.2 Selected census data

A separate document provides a more detailed demographic profile drawn from the August 2001 National Census of Population and Housing that has recently been released. The most interesting figures for the purposes of this particular project include the following:

- The combined *population* of the two suburbs is close to 17,000, with Redfern having almost twice the number of residents as Waterloo.
- There are 1,765 *children aged 0 to 14*. They comprise a higher proportion of the Waterloo population (14%) than the Redfern population (8.5%), but these figures still fall well short of the national average of 21%.
- *Indigenous Australians* comprise just over 7% of Waterloo’s population and just under 3% of Redfern’s. Children and young people under the age of 18 make up 43% of Indigenous population in Waterloo and 29% in Redfern.
- There are 928 *families with children under 15 years old* – 22% of all Redfern families and 35% of all Waterloo families.
- *Sole parent families* with children under 15 comprise 8.5% of all families in Redfern and 22.8% of all families in Waterloo.
- Just over 67% of all *dwellings* in Waterloo and almost 23% in Redfern are owned by a State Housing Authority, compared to an average for NSW suburbs as a whole of around 7%. This data not only indicates and contributes to high levels of disadvantage in the area, but it also helps explain the higher incidence of gentrification in Redfern. There are many more private properties in Redfern for better-off people to rent and buy than there are in Waterloo.
- This helps explain the different income patterns in the two suburbs. The actual number of people who are very poor (that is, have an income of less than \$159 per week) is about the same in both suburbs, and there is little difference in the number who have only between \$160 and \$299 to live on. However, while those with \$160 to \$299 constitute the largest income grouping in Waterloo, those with more than \$600 a week constitute the largest group in Redfern. The gap between the rich and the poor is particularly evident in Redfern.

2.3 Other relevant data

The consultants have also gathered some relevant data from other sources which are presented here for background information.

Income support payments

The Centrelink data for Redfern and Waterloo (provided to the consultants by South Sydney Council) show that, in July 2001, there were around:

- 1,600 people receiving a Disability Support Pension;
- 1,000 people receiving Newstart Allowance (an unemployment benefit);
- 460 people receiving Parenting Payment Single (sole parents);
- 70 people receiving Parenting Payment Partnered (the partners of unemployed people who are caring for children);
- 2,500 people receiving an Age Pension.

School Enrolments

As at 16 August 2002, enrolments at the three public schools in the area were as follows:

- | | |
|------------------------------------|----|
| ▪ Redfern Public School (primary) | 67 |
| ▪ Waterloo Public School (primary) | 85 |
| ▪ Cleveland Street High School | 81 |

In addition, Our Lady of Mt Carmel School (a Catholic primary school in Waterloo) had 129 students; and Waratah, an alternative/transitional education program for Indigenous young people who are not coping with or attending the mainstream system can take up to 8 young people aged 12 to 15 at any one time.

There is some dispute and divided opinion in the area regarding whether all who should be enrolled in schools are in fact enrolled. Some youth services and Council workers believe that both observation and 1996 census data indicate that the number of enrolments does not equal the number of 'enroll-able' children. The Education Department has used various means to ascertain the truth of this belief and has concluded it is not correct.

Finally, the data in relation to school enrolments reveal two other important facts.

- The 'turnover' of students in the schools tends to be higher than average. Cleveland Street High, for example, estimates that it has a total turnover of students every two years.
- There are significant numbers of 'out of area' children enrolled in the three schools.

School suspensions

The Port Jackson District of the Education Department keeps detailed figures showing instances of short and long suspensions. The suspensions vary considerably from term to term. The following table compares the second terms of the current year and last year:

School suspensions

| | Term 2, 2001 | Term 2, 2002 |
|-------------|------------------|------------------|
| Redfern PS | 11 short; 2 long | 8 short; 2 long |
| Waterloo PS | 3 short; 0 long | 0 short; 0 long |
| Cleveland | 6 short; 1 long | 10 short; 0 long |

School absences

In terms of average daily absence rates, the figures for the public schools in Waterloo and Redfern are markedly higher than for the Port Jackson district as a whole (58 in total). It should be noted that the figures for both Redfern Public and Cleveland Street High are very volatile, and the variations may be affected by different record-keeping methods at different times. With this caution in mind, the following information is pertinent:

- The average daily absence rate for secondary schools in the District as a whole has fluctuated around the 10% mark for the past 5 years. In Cleveland Street High over the same period, it has ranged from a high of 18.6% in 1997 to a low of 10.2% in 1999. In 2000 and 2001, it stood at 11.6% and 15.9% respectively.
- The average daily absence rate for Kindergarten to Year 6 in the District as a whole has fluctuated around the 6% mark for the past 5 years. In Waterloo and Redfern Public Schools over the same period, it has ranged from a low of 8.1% (in Waterloo in 1997) to a high of 17% (in Redfern in that same year). In 2000 and 2001, the figures for Waterloo were 13.4% and 9.9% respectively, while Redfern had rates of 13.6% and 15.8% respectively.

3 Research on risk and protective factors

The most comprehensive piece of Australian research in the field of developmental crime prevention is the Homel Report mentioned earlier. This report identified 57 risk and 37 protective factors relevant to offending behaviour, broken into five categories – individual child, family, school, life events, and community and cultural.

Many of these factors will be familiar to people involved in human services, for the factors that can place children and young people at risk of anti-social behaviour or offending can also place them at risk of other adversities in life such as having ill health or performing poorly at school.

It is important to understand at the outset that both the risk and protective factors are only predictive, and that the interactions between the two are complex. As one South Australian paper put it:

“No single risk factor has a strong enough impact to ‘cause’ criminal behaviour and no one protective factor can prevent criminal behaviour. Similarly, not everyone affected by risk factors will offend; and not everyone who offends is affected by risk factors.”³

The Homel Report elaborated on this issue when it quoted another study that stated:

“...influences can place a child on a trajectory or path. (This) is not a fixed or determined course...some outcomes become more probable ...and other outcomes become less probable...”⁴

What *is* known with some certainty is that their effect is cumulative – the more risk and protective factors the child is exposed to, the greater their impact. Finally, as the South Australian paper says:

“Timing is also critical. Risk factors have different impacts at different stages of development; and the frequency with which they impact (for example, whether a person has time to ‘get over’ one experience before the next one hits) makes a difference as well.”

With these important understandings and provisos, following are some examples of the risk and protective factors in each of the five domains identified by the Homel Report.

³ South Australian Crime Prevention Unit (2002) *Briefing Paper: Early Intervention in Crime Prevention in South Australia*.

⁴ National Crime Prevention (1999), *op cit* p. 49

Individual child attributes

Risks: low birth weight; prenatal or birth injury; disability; insecure attachment; difficult temperament; poor problem solving and social skills; beliefs about aggression; low self-esteem; lack of empathy; alienation; disruptive behaviour; impulsiveness.

Protections: social competence and skills; attachment to family; problem solving capacity; optimism; empathy; school achievement; internal locus of control; above average intelligence; moral beliefs and values; easy temperament.

Family attributes

Risks: parental psychiatric disorders (especially depression); substance abuse; family violence and conflict; disorganised family life; social isolation; father absence; long-term unemployment; criminality or anti-social models; neglect; poor supervision of children; lack of warmth and affection towards children; harsh or inconsistent discipline; low involvement in children's activities.

Protections: supporting, caring and competent parents; family harmony and stability; small family size; more than two years between siblings; 'required helpfulness'; supportive relationship with other adult; strong family norms and morality.

School context

Risks: school failure; 'deviant' peer group; bullying; peer rejection; poor attachment to school; inadequate behaviour management.

Protections: positive school environment; pro-social peer group; sense of belonging; opportunities for success; recognition of achievement; school norms re violence.

Life events

Risks: family break up; death of a family member; war or natural disasters.

Protections: Meeting significant person; moving to new area; opportunities at critical turning points or major life transitions.

Community and cultural factors

Risks: socio-economic disadvantage; population density and housing conditions; urban area; neighbourhood violence and crime; cultural norms in which violence is acceptable response to frustration; social or cultural discrimination; lack of support services.

Protections: access to support services; community networking; attachment to the community; participation in community group; cultural/community norms against violence; a strong cultural identity and ethnic pride.

4 Risks and gaps in Redfern & Waterloo

Interviews conducted for this project focused first on seeking perceptions of the key risk factors in the lives of children and young people up to the age of 14 in Redfern and Waterloo – especially factors which place them at risk of developing problematic behaviours including involvement in crime. The interviews also explored what protects children vulnerable to these risks, and whether these protections were sufficiently present or strong in the service and support systems available in Redfern and Waterloo.

In order to keep this paper as short as possible, it does not list the protective factors identified by those interviewed. This is because people tended to give shorter and more cursory responses to this question, and those given were almost invariably the other side of the coin of the risk factors and easy to deduce. (For example, parenting skills training and breaking down social isolation offer protections against the risks of poor parenting or unsupported sole parents.) Consequently, the issue of identifying and building up protections will be left for further discussion at the forum.

There was a high degree of consistency in the responses provided by community organisations, parents and government agencies; and between their responses and the findings of research. There was also a keen appreciation of the dynamic interaction between different factors at work in the lives of children and young people. They spoke as though the boundaries between Homel's five domains were porous and that factors in one domain directly influenced factors in another. To give just two examples:

- Almost all respondents saw a direct link between Indigenous peoples' experience of dispossession and discrimination (the community/cultural domain) and substance abuse and poor parenting (the family domain). In turn, the substance abuse in the family domain (which affected a wide cross-section of families, not only Indigenous families) had a direct impact on neighbourhood violence and crime.
- Parents saw a direct link between population density and housing conditions (the community domain) and their difficulties in properly supervising and monitoring their children (the family domain), as well as in their children's beliefs about aggression (the individual child domain).

4.1 Risks

To help reflect these dynamic and fluid interactions, this section of the paper will organise peoples' responses regarding risk factors in a circular rather than a linear schema, namely:

- *Outer Ring* – broad social and economic factors that have a flow-through effect on the community and on individuals
- *Middle Ring* – factors specific to the Redfern/Waterloo area
- *Inner Ring* – factors evident within families and individual children and young people who live in Redfern and Waterloo.

As far as possible, the risk factors which were cited by the most people are placed first in the following lists. This means that the lists can be read ‘downwards’ in terms of a rough – but only a rough – weighting. Where one view or idea was expressed particularly strongly by a specific group (whether parents, children, non-government organisations or government agencies), this will be noted.

Outer Ring

- poverty and long-term unemployment (including inter-generational joblessness);
- the legacy of dispossession and the ‘Stolen Generations’ in Aboriginal communities;
- discrimination and racism towards Indigenous people and other minorities, including people from non-English speaking backgrounds;
- poor experiences with major social institutions such as the police and child welfare authorities;
- the increasingly common phenomenon in metropolitan cities of some suburbs being ‘left behind’ while those around them thrive (mentioned particularly by people in government agencies);
- general negative attitudes towards poor communities which tend to ‘blame the victims’ (mentioned particularly by some community organisations).

Middle Ring

- the large number of families and individual people with high support needs (including those flowing from insufficiently-treated mental health and aggression problems), due particularly to the very high concentration of public housing and the high proportion of ‘priority allocations’ within that housing stock;
- high and visible drug and alcohol abuse, amongst both adults (including parents) and young people (including relatively young children);
- racism (and, according to a few parents and community organisations, ‘reverse racism’);
- insufficient family support services to meet needs, especially services that are sensitive and appropriate to residents’ particular cultures, histories and situations (such as the specific needs of teenage mothers, sole parents and grandparents caring for grandchildren; and Aboriginal peoples’ history with ‘the welfare’);
- inadequately resourced community services (particularly in terms of program funds), often operating from premises that are unattractive or poorly maintained or in inappropriate locations;
- disconnection from and non-valuing of schooling, and unusual numbers of children and young people on the streets during school hours;

- a noticeable number of ‘out-of-area’ children and young people, both on the streets (with Redfern being a transport hub) and in enrolments in local schools;
- poor ‘community policing’ and a poor relationship between the police and sections of the community;
- the frequency of aggression and violence in public places (mentioned particularly by parents/carers);
- tensions between different groups of children and young people, often leading to bullying and intimidation both in and outside school (mentioned particularly by children and parents);
- health data that points to higher than average rates in the area of low birth weight babies, perinatal mortality and infant mortality;
- relatively low numbers of children in formal childcare services or pre-schools;
- heightened levels of fear regarding personal safety (mentioned particularly by children and parents);
- lack of affordable and attractive recreational and sporting amenities and activities (mentioned particularly by children and parents, and by some community organisations who emphasised the affordability problem);
- the unattractiveness of the physical environment, encompassing concerns such as used syringes and broken glass in streets and lanes, and run down community facilities and playground equipment;
- people feeling they have no ‘stake’ in the community or control over the environment;
- the juxtaposition of pockets of gentrification within larger areas of disadvantage.

Inner Ring

- the frequent incidence of neglect of children within families, resulting in: hunger, unkempt appearance and inadequate clothing, insufficient sleep, behaviour problems, general unhappiness, lack of supervision/monitoring of behaviour in public places, and disconnection from/poor performance in school;
- poor parenting skills and low levels of social support for parents;
- family violence and abuse;
- insufficient financial resources to meet basic material needs or to provide little ‘extras’ for the children;
- high levels of emotional and psychological stress, especially amongst sole parents;
- absent or only periodically present fathers, and poor male role modelling;

- ‘chaotic’ and disorganised families;
- unstable family situations, with frequent changes in the household composition or where the family lives;
- children moving between different households in their extended families (often resulting in disruptions to schooling);
- a significant number of very young parents (especially within the Aboriginal community);
- poor communication skills within families, resulting in children who have difficulty communicating and conversing;
- children struggling with cultural identity and pride.

4.2 Key intervention points

Responses to questions concerning the times or points at which it was particularly important to build protections around families and children were extremely consistent – across the different groups interviewed and when compared to the research literature – with the following being frequently mentioned:

Life cycle events – common to all

- pre and post natal periods;
- the early childhood period;
- school transition points (from home to pre-school/primary, and from primary to secondary);
- the 8 to 10 year period and the 10 to 12 year period – times when children have particular developmental needs and issues that are often not appreciated or addressed;
- times when there are deaths or separations in the immediate or extended family (especially in Aboriginal families).

Specific situations or events – experienced by some children and families

- teenage parents, especially mothers;
- parents engaging in substance abuse;
- first time parents;
- in the lead-up to and the aftermath of family breakdowns and separations;
- at points of change in the household composition, such as the addition of a new partner or sibling or a parent returning after having been absent;

- at the point a carer other than the parent (such as grandparent or aunt) takes responsibility for the children;
- instances of unusually high levels of instability in family and care arrangements;
- when a child is consistently hungry, inadequately clothed, or 'looks' neglected;
- when children demonstrate speech and communication difficulties;
- when there are sudden adverse changes in children's behaviour;
- when a child first demonstrates 'school aversion' or first hits problems with a particular teacher;
- when younger children are constantly 'hanging out' with older children who are poor role models for them;
- the first time children (especially in the 7 to 12 age bracket) are 'spoken to' or 'moved on' by the police.

4.3 Views on current gaps or inadequacies in supports and protections

The people and organisations interviewed were also asked what gaps existed in the support and service system in Redfern and Waterloo for children and young people at risk of having their development undermined and of developing anti-social and possibly offending behaviour.

4.3.1 Parents and carers

When asked: *What would help you in the task of raising children in this neighbourhood?*, parents and carers nominated the following:

- More activities for children after school, on weekends and during holidays, which are free (or very low cost) and where children are able to experience and learn new things in a supervised and safe environment. This response also encompassed community activities which involve parents and other family members. It was suggested that there is a need for activities that bring children and families from different cultural backgrounds together.
- In particular, more structured and supervised sporting, gym and 'exciting' activities that appeal to boys and young men.
- Greater support within the school system, including help to get kids to school; homework support within the school; things that facilitate more parental involvement in schools; and not closing the local school.
- More practical support for parents in terms of their financial, employment and housing situation.

- Initiatives that facilitate mutual support with other parents, such as groups for single parents (with child care provided).
- Improvements to the physical environment and in the maintenance of community facilities and recreational spaces and of playground equipment.
- Better promotion of community services and resources so that more people know about them and the opportunities available.
- More positive media coverage of the area.

4.3.2 Children and young people

The small sample of children interviewed made the following suggestions about what would improve the lives of them and other young people living in Redfern and Waterloo:

- After-school, weekend and holiday programs with ‘fun’ activities and outings and where “you can learn things”.
- Good recreational facilities which are accessible to all children and young people (not just the ‘in’ group or dominant groups) and which are free or cheap.
- Cleaning up the area and making ‘things look better’.
- Better parks and playgrounds.
- Practical and financial support for parents.

4.3.3 Community services, schools and government agencies

There was very little difference in views of these three groups of respondents regarding service and support gaps in the area. They noted the following:

Specific gaps in the formal service system

- The inadequate supply of family support services and workers, especially ones which are:
 - acceptable to Aboriginal people;
 - appropriate to people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds;
 - reach out to and support fathers;
 - provide practical support to parents and carers across a range of areas;
 - focus on building up parenting skills, especially amongst teenage mothers and parents with substance abuse or mental health problems.
- The virtual non-existence of community development workers who are unencumbered by the need to deliver direct services and hence free to focus on facilitating and catalysing solutions to broader community problems and issues.
- The paucity of peer support and mentoring programs for both children/young people and parents/carers.

- The removal of the drug and alcohol service from the local community health service and the lack of an accessible detoxification/rehabilitation facility that takes a family focus.
- The lack of a Reconnect-type service that intervenes early to prevent the breakdown of the parent/child relationship.
- No organised support for pregnant teenagers and very young mothers to continue their education.
- The lack of expert assistance for children with communication and language development problems.
- The need for more, and more attractive, public spaces where young people are welcome and where they can interact in a positive way with each other and with adults in the community.

Specific improvements needed in the existing service system

- The desirability of child/youth-orientated services and schools engaging in more outreach work with families, and involving families and other members of the community more meaningfully in the work of the services/schools.
- The importance of services finding better ways to deal with their ‘problem kids’.
- The provision of more financial support to services to meet the incidental costs involved in running programs and for capital costs, especially those related to premises.
- The need to ensure that services have sufficient numbers of staff and adequately trained staff so that service quality can be continually improved and existing resources (such as outdoor recreation areas and crisis housing) can be fully utilised.
- The desirability of finding ways to overcome the practical barriers to providing more services and programs outside standard office hours.
- The need to more systematically link camps and excursions to on-going skill and personal development programs.
- The urgency of better addressing the situation of chronic ‘school refusers’ and children who are frequently suspended from school.

General issues on which there is broad consensus

- Complaints of ‘boredom’ by children and young people are as much about a desire to have more responsibility and a ‘valued place’ in the life of the community, as a desire for more opportunities to socialise and to be engaged in ‘activities’.
- The need to address the problems that flow from inadequate premises, inappropriately located services, or under-utilised facilities and services.

- The critical importance of recognising the practical problems and the erosion of community trust that flow from ‘services coming and going’ as a result of pilot projects (which are not continued) and short-term programs.
- The need for a community-wide plan to meet the on-going training needs of workers.
- The need to take care that the establishment of new service networks do not overlap or duplicate existing networks, and do not improperly usurp the roles of existing networks.
- The need to recognise how difficult it is for over-stretched community organisations to meet the extra demands placed on them by the current upsurge in strategic thinking and activity in the area, especially as a result of the Partnership Project of the Premier’s Department, and to ensure that this does not result in new and unhelpful competitive tensions.
- At the same time, there was strong support for a continuing focus on consciously building a more coherent support and service system in the area through greater coordination, collaboration and the development of linkages both within and between the community and public sectors.

General issues which are contested

- Some respondents felt there was a need to more openly and effectively address some entrenched animosities between some agencies and inappropriate ‘territorial’ behaviour, whereas others felt this was a ‘beat-up’ problem.
- Some expressed a view that services of a similar kind should at least investigate the various options to use their combined resources more efficiently and effectively. Others saw this as a desire to ‘force mergers’ which ran contrary to the particular histories and community roots of many services in the area.

5 Issues for discussion at the forum

5.1 The broad task of the forum

This forum has been convened to provide an opportunity for those who participated in the interviews (and a few others) to come together and collectively consider the implications of their individual responses. The end result will hopefully be the development of a clearer consensus amongst key people in the community regarding broad future directions for the Pathways to Prevention Project in the Redfern-Waterloo area.

This broad direction-setting by the forum will help inform the next stage of the process when decisions will need to be made regarding the allocation of the available funds (around \$500,000 over two years), and the process whereby the whole project will be supported, monitored and evaluated. It is anticipated that the Commonwealth and State Attorney-General Departments will seek to find an efficient mechanism whereby community representatives will continue to be involved in the on-going implementation process.

5.1.1 Relevant contextual factors

In determining the broad directions, the forum will need to be mindful of the situation in the Redfern-Waterloo area at this particular point in time. There are some key contextual factors that are particularly relevant for the Pathways Project:

Partnership Project

First, the area is already the focus of a major community capacity building exercise which is largely being driven and coordinated by the Premier's Department Partnership Project. This broad initiative has around \$7 million at its disposal over three years "to purchase a range of new programs which target those areas identified by the community as being of highest priority".⁵ The Partnership Project has already identified some priority areas, many of which are directly relevant to early intervention for crime prevention. Consequently, any decisions regarding the use of the half million dollars for Pathways to Prevention projects must clearly mesh with this larger initiative.

In particular, the Pathways initiative needs to be mindful of the following developments that are already occurring under the Partnership Project:

- The allocation of \$400,000-\$500,000 a year for two years (2002-03 and 2003-04) for the establishment of a new intensive family support service, and of \$140,000 in each of those years to enhance existing services and networks in this area. The lead agency for this work is the Department of Community Services (DoCS), and its development is the subject of a separate consultancy that has already been conducted and whose report should soon be available.

⁵ All information about the Premier's Department initiative is taken from a leaflet entitled *Redfern/Waterloo Partnership Project* produced by the project team in 2002.

- The decision to establish a Street Team project staffed by people with expertise in child protection, drug and alcohol harm minimisation, mental health issues and the particular needs of Indigenous communities. It will target children and young people congregating in public places at risk of harm or engaging in anti-social or criminal behaviour, and will operate from noon to 3am seven days a week. It will provide counselling, direct practical assistance (through brokerage funds), and link the young people to other supports and services. Again, the lead agency for this development is DoCS.
- The allocation of \$140,000 in each of 2002-03 and 2003-04 to projects and initiatives undertaken by youth services in the area that are specifically targeted at filling gaps in service delivery such as evening and weekend activities for young people, with the lead agency being DoCS.
- A commitment to a Youth Intervention and Development Program to develop programs and activities for individuals and groups of young people engaged in risk-taking or anti-social behaviour, such as camps, mentoring and intensive individualised case management. The lead agency is the Premier's Department.
- The provision of \$66,000 to support Kidspeak, a collaborative project developed by a number of community and government agencies to reach out to isolated young children and their families. The lead agency is DoCS.

The new Community School

A decision has already been taken by the NSW Government to establish a new school – the Alexandria Park Community School – in January 2002. It will be a Kindergarten to Year 12 school (on two closely located campuses) and will replace the existing Redfern and Waterloo Primary Schools and the Cleveland Street High School. The decision is a contentious one that is still being opposed by sections of the community who wish to retain the smaller local schools.

Despite the continuing controversy, the consultants are of the view that the development of the Pathways initiative must proceed as if the Government's decision will stand. This being the case, the broad direction setting for this initiative should be mindful of the opportunities presented by the new school for new projects that simultaneously work with children and their families.

Other relevant initiatives

The 'Families First' initiative of the NSW Cabinet will be making funds available to the DoCS Metro South East area in 2003-04. Neither the quantum of total funds nor the proportion that will go to Redfern-Waterloo (if any) is yet known.

South Sydney City Council is the process of developing:

- a Crime Prevention Plan (in conjunction with the NSW Attorney General's Crime Prevention Division, the local police command and other agencies);
- a Public Domain Plan for all open space within South Sydney (in conjunction with PlanningNSW and the NSW Department of Housing); and

- a Community Facilities Plan, including determining the best locations and identifying strategies to fund the facilities that are needed.

In addition, work has geared up again to redevelop the area around The Block which has now been named the RED (Redfern, Everleigh & Darlington) Strategy. The Department of Housing has also announced plans to redevelop several blocks adjoining Elizabeth Street opposite Redfern Park and combining public and private housing.

5.1.2 Implications for the Pathways Project

It is clear that all of these initiatives will have a major bearing on decisions taken regarding priority areas and allocations of funds in the Pathways to Prevention Project. They are directly relevant to some of the main concerns expressed by the participants in the consultation process to date, including the needs for:

- more, and more effective, family support services;
- more outreach work with children and young people who are most at risk of anti-social or offending behaviour;
- improved resources for existing services working with children, young people and families;
- more attractive public spaces and physical environments, including more free or low cost recreational opportunities for children and families;
- better facilities and premises for community organisations and services.

The scale and scope of the strategic thinking that has already been done, the strategies and endeavours already begun, and the resources already provided to progress the work makes the task facing the Pathways Project both more difficult and more exciting. It is more difficult because of the complex 'jig-saw' process that will be necessary to ensure new duplications or competitive tensions do not emerge in services and endeavours. It is more exciting because the money provided by the Pathways Project will be able to contribute to a broader pool of resources capable of making a real difference to the lives of children, young people and families in the area.

However, achieving this goal will require both the participants in the forum and the on-going managers of the Pathways Project to think very carefully and strategically about the particular use to which the funds should be put. It is also anticipated that it will require the representatives of the Attorney Generals' Departments to engage in concrete negotiations with the Premier's Department, DoCS, the Department of Housing and South Sydney Community Council before taking final decisions.

5.2 Specific tasks for the forum

The agenda for the forum will be constructed to allow participants to focus on three key issues that require further consideration.

5.2.1 Prioritising the risk and protective factors, and the intervention points, that should be the focus of this project

When individual participants in the interviews were asked their views regarding the most serious risks, the most effective protections, and the most important times to intervene, they were inevitably drawing on their own particular experience, interests, expertise and area of work. The next logical task is to ask all participants to consider all the individual views and to develop an agreed 'collective wisdom' on the most important priorities.

This task will be particularly important in relation to the protective factors that were considered only cursorily in the individual responses to date. Yet in many ways, identifying the specific protections that the project should try to build is even more important than identifying the risks. There are two reasons for this:

- Risk factors can only ever be statements of possibility or probability, not certainty. Some children exposed to risks will not succumb to them, while some children who are not obviously exposed to them will progress to offending or criminal behaviour.
- The research to date indicates that risk factors are, in any event, difficult to change or modify.

It therefore makes sense to focus primarily on trying to identify the protective factors that are most likely to be effective in altering the risk trajectory, and to build them around all children, young people and their families but with a particular concentration of resources on those who are most at risk and on times when they are most at risk.

5.2.2 Developing principles to help guide selection of Pathway initiatives

The second task is to develop a set of principles to help guide the selection of initiatives and strategies which will receive funding from the Pathways Project, and to help guide the way they should be conducted. These principles will be invaluable to the consultants (in the development of the final report) and to the two Attorney-Generals' Departments (in their decision-making and management roles).

The consultants will distribute a draft set of principles at the forum to get the thinking process started.

If time permits, the forum may also be able to consider broad strategies or initiatives which the project could explore further in the next stage of decision-making.

5.2.3 Considering processes and mechanisms for the effective implementation of the Pathways Project

The third task will to consider effective and efficient ways by which workers and active community members could have a continuing role in the development and implementation of the Pathways Project, including the evaluation of outcomes.

Both the Commonwealth and State Attorney General Departments are committed to progressing the project in a collaborative and participatory manner, but need guidance from people on the ground as to the best ways to do this. In particular, they are mindful of the significant number of pre-existing networks and forums which deal with matters relevant to this project and of the already high demands on staff and volunteers to be involved in them. Guidance is therefore being sought as to whether a new structure should be established to progress this work or whether it should be progressed through other means.

Community services, schools and government departments consulted for the Redfern-Waterloo Pathways to Prevention Project

Schools/school-based projects

Redfern Public School
Waterloo Public School
Cleveland Street High School
Alexandria Park Community School (to commence January 2003)
Waratah Education Centre

Community services and agencies (individually interviewed)

Aunty's Place
Benevolent Society (Central Sydney Scarba Service and Home-Start Program)
Binya Gurung Ante-Natal and Early Childhood Service
Centacare
Connect Redfern
The Fact-Tree Youth Service
The Factory
Inner Sydney Regional Council for Social development
Kids Speak
Lloyd McDermott Rugby Development team
Mudgin-gal Women's and Children's Centre
Redfern Legal Centre
Redfern Occasional Child Care Centre
St Vincent de Paul (Redfern)
The Settlement
The Shop Women's and Children's Centre
South Sydney Police and Community Youth Club
South Sydney Youth Service
Streetbeat
Waterloo Girls Centre
Wunanbiri

Community groups and agencies (consulted through group discussions)

Emerge (Hillsong Church)
Gathering Place
Langton Centre
St Saviour's Anglican Church
St Vincent de Paul (Sydney Archdiocesan Council)
The Nuns on The Block
Waterloo-Redfern Community Development Project
Youth Matter

Government agencies

Department of Aboriginal Affairs
Department of Community Services
Department of Education and Training
Department of Family and Community Services
Department of Health
Department of Housing
Department of Juvenile Justice
Department of Sport and Recreation
Redfern Police Command
South Sydney City Council