

# Social Mix: How do we make redeveloped Waterloo a great community to live in?

A workshop and community discussion organised by Inner Sydney Voice and Shelter NSW about social and housing mix, community relationships and social networks.



**INNER SYDNEY VOICE**  
regional social development council



## DEBRIEFING

<b>Workshop Title</b>	Social Mix: How do we make redeveloped Waterloo a great community to live in?
<b>Objectives</b>	Discuss community views on social mix, the preferred ways of mixing private, social and affordable housing, and the conditions on implementation to make redeveloped Waterloo a great community to live in.
<b>Held on</b>	Wednesday 11 <sup>th</sup> April 2018 – 9.30am-12.30pm
<b>Target Audience</b>	Waterloo public housing tenants, local residents, community and government workers.
<b>Organised by</b>	Inner Sydney Voice & Shelter NSW
<b>Facilitated by</b>	Bronwyn Penrith Karen Walsh, Shelter NSW CEO Michael Darcy, Researcher on Social Housing policies Thomas Chailloux, Inner Sydney Voice
<b>Report Aim</b>	Debrief and record outcomes of the workshop for those who couldn't attend.
<b>Attendance</b>	<b>32 people total</b> <b>25 people filled the attendance sheet:</b> 16 identified as female and 9 as male 7 was between 25 and 44 years old, 11 between 45 and 64 years old, 6 between 65 and 84 years old, and 1 didn't say. 1 identified as Aboriginal, 1 spoke a language other than English at home.

All of the documents mentioned are available on request.

### Social Mix in Redeveloped Waterloo - Workshop & Community Discussion #2

#### 11/04/18 Summary of Feedback

*Did you find the content of the workshop relevant and useful?*

Very useful: 6/18

Useful: 12/18

Not Useful: 0/18

*How did you find the structure of the workshop?*

Well structured: 13/18

Could be improved: 5/18

Poorly structured: 0/18

*How did you find the timing of the workshop?*

Too long: 2/18

Right amount of time: 13/18

Too short: 3/18

*Would you recommend your friend/neighbour to participate in a similar workshop?*

Definitely: 16/18

Possibly: 2/18

No: 0/18

*Additional suggestions/feedback:*

- Great venue
- The room could be better set up – a bit noisy from other users on the same floor – a bit stuffy.
- Handouts available when people leave. Might need more time or done as a series of workshops.
- More time to promote the community
- Sustainable transport options (?)
- Good to continue delving into these topics – it will help the community when options and master plan are finally unveiled
- Workshop worked reasonably well
- Target for tenants with children – indigenous children (?)
- Nice work Thomas
- Thanks – Another useful session with a good, appropriate mix of participants. Good balance of input and discussion. Thanks!

## [Introduction: Social Mix, How do we make redeveloped Waterloo a great community to live in? – Debriefing](#)

The community discussion was introduced by Bronwyn Penrith, chair of Mudgin Gal Aboriginal Women organisation and local resident, and Thomas Chailloux, Capacity Building worker at Inner Sydney Voice.

Thomas reminded participants of the context of the workshop and how it was following a previous Capacity Building workshop about Social mix held in May 2017. This new discussion about the progressive introduction of private residents into the Waterloo community and how do we create a successfully socially mixed community is to be understood within the context of Waterloo Master Planning. While the first workshop focused on the concept of social mix and its efficiency and outcomes as a public policy, this second workshop is a more practical discussion about how to make it work in Waterloo. In other words, while the capacity building community discussion allow for all opinions and point of views, it is also necessary to recognise that a political decision has been taken by NSW Government. The new Waterloo community will be made up of a majority of private residents.

While there can be many challenges and criticisms of this public policy and its likeliness to achieve the desired outcomes of “Future Directions for Social Housing in NSW” policy, this new discussion is more about having community input on how this social mix is to be implemented rather than discussing whether it is a good policy in itself. Having presented this framework for the workshop, it was however reiterated that all opinions are welcome in capacity building workshops and that it was

difficult to separate discussions about best implementation processes from discussions about the relevance and efficiency of the policy itself.

Bronwyn Penrith gave an Acknowledgement of Country and reflected on her experience as a local resident of Waterloo as well as someone who has worked supporting the community for many years. She recommended that if we are to build a truly mixed and diversified community upon and with the existing one, we need to start discussing this early on and in an inclusive way. Another important thing to think about is that the built environment needs to reflect the diversity of needs, including dwellings adapted to the needs of ageing single tenants, large families, Aboriginal families.

## Presentation of UNSW City Futures/Shelter NSW Research on Living Well in Greater Density – Karen Walsh, Shelter NSW CEO – Debriefing

Karen Walsh, CEO of Shelter NSW, presented “Equitable Density”, the research that Shelter NSW commissioned last year to the City Futures Research Centre about the impact of densification on disadvantaged communities.

The “Equitable Density” research consists in three reports focusing on different scales of the urban environment: the building scale, the neighbourhood scale and the metropolitan scale. The three reports examine the impact of densification and high density living on communities and especially its most disadvantaged components. They also include public policy recommendations aimed at maximising benefits and opportunities of densification while minimising negative impacts.

Karen started by reviewing the last decade of urban planning and public policy in Australia and how focus on maximising investor returns had led to poor outcomes in design and construction quality of high density developments. These building scale defects, poor design and construction, however, do not affect all residents proportionately. Indeed, renters and poor people are more likely to be affected by these poor outcomes due to a variety of reasons. These include NSW legal framework which disproportionately favours landlords, lower spatial mobility of disadvantaged households, and poorer construction trying to cut corners on affordable housing developments.

This negatively impacts the health of disadvantaged residents, as well as social and community relations. High turnover of renters, for example, makes it harder to build meaningful and positive social relations with other local residents. This is why the social housing tenants of the future Waterloo might actually represent the most stable and core part of the future Waterloo community.

The second part of the presentation focused on factors to consider to build better neighbourhood facilities, and what produces good outcomes for low income and disadvantaged residents. It also introduced different definitions of social mix and noted that depending on who uses it it can take on different meanings. In Australia it is usually used to refer to a housing mix (private/social/affordable) and/or a mix of residents with different incomes. When used to refer to an urban public policy, social mix is nearly always used to refer to the introduction of middle/high income residents to a predominantly low income neighbourhood, and never the other way around.

Arguments in favour of social mix include reduction in concentration of disadvantage and the potential negative neighbourhood effect, stigma, as well as a potential “rub on” effect from proximity of the middle class residents. These arguments and in particular the metaphor that “A rising tide lifts all boats” stimulated a lively discussion with participants of the workshop. In particular, the link with the economic theory of ‘trickle down economics’ was discussed, as well as the potential for social mix to reduce disadvantage in low income neighbourhoods. Some participants agreed with a potential lifting effect while others argued that the negative impact of

gentrification, stigma, and upward price pressure on shops and services, as well as stress on existing social and solidarity networks, would outweigh positive effects of social mix.

The conclusion of the presentation focused on how do we create “places for people” that integrate productivity, sustainability, liveability, leadership and design excellence. The presentation allowed for a general overview of social mix policies and their implementation models.

The PowerPoint of the presentation and other discussion materials used, including the three Equitable Density reports are attached to this debriefing document and available on request from [cb@innersydneyvoice.org.au](mailto:cb@innersydneyvoice.org.au).

### Defining & Prioritising issues of concern: A group discussion facilitated by Bronwyn Penrith & Michael Darcy, Researcher on Social Housing policies– Debriefing

Michael and Bronwyn reminded participants that the community discussion of today was not about forming a definite opinion on the complex subject that is social mix, but rather to get more information and try to think together as a community. Through this, we will be more able as a community to suggest ‘conditions’ and make recommendations about necessary services, urban facilities and amenities that are needed to make a socially mixed community successful in Waterloo. It’s about reflecting together on issues so we are ready as a community to respond to the ‘Options Testing’ phase of Waterloo Master Planning consultation, where different concepts for the redevelopment will be presented to the community.

Before to break into groups, a few issues related to Social Mix were discussed as a group such as the “A rising tide lifts all boats” theory, whether Bonnyrigg was a successful development in terms of creating a mixed community, and how the Waterloo Redevelopment might impact the existing service system. Waterloo not being a greenfield site, we need to ensure the service continuity during the urban renewal process, especially given its 15 to 20 years length.

Michael Darcy urged the residents to think critically about potential benefits of social mix, as it can be hard to distinguish between what is a positive consequence of social mix and what is a simple statistical dilution of disadvantage due to the introduction of ‘better off people’ into the community. He encouraged local residents to think about who does the redevelopment benefits, and what can be gained out of it for current social housing residents, but also what are the risks and what can be lost. One issue for example is to differentiate between mix and mixing. We know that in despite of housing mix in a neighbourhood (with private, social and affordable housing), people often do not mix. Outside of parents who have their children in the same school, there is little evidence that housing mix leads to social mixing.

The two most important aspects discussed were around tenure blindness and equal access to common areas. Making a large development tenure blind can be quite challenging, especially because it becomes rapidly apparent where social housing residents live, due to difference in landlord maintenance practices, but also because people don’t have the same budgets to decorate their house. A very simple example is that if you don’t provide actual blinds to social housing tenants, it will rapidly become clear where they live. Since they will not be able to afford proper blinds, they are likely to use makeshift materials whereas landlords/investors and owner occupiers are likely to buy higher quality blinds.

Participants also noted that it was very important to ensure that social housing residents in the future will have the same rights to access common spaces as private residents. This includes public open space but also internal green space within buildings. Another problematic and hard to control

aspects is that some private residents tend to 'retreat' towards semi-private spaces that are only open to other residents of their building (internal gym/pool, etc.), jeopardising 'social mixing'.

Another important question was the potential selection of social housing tenants and the extent of the 'right to return' guaranteed by NSW government. Although this hasn't happened in Australia so far, in some social mix developments overseas, tenants have been known to be selected. One fear was that as time goes on, private residents might push back against an increasing concentration of people with high needs in local social housing, which could then become restricted. To a certain extent, this is already happening through Housing policies such as the Local Allocation Strategy banning people with recent drug convictions to access public housing in the inner city. This is to be connected with the fact that private residents are more likely to call the police, which increases social control levels. This was seen either as an asset or as a threat to community relations and stability depending on participants.

One issue related to the 'right to return' is that with the long term timeframe of the redevelopment, people needs might change. For example, shape of families might change, preventing people from coming back. Many Aboriginal people, for example, might become parents or carers during the redevelopment process, how will they be able to return to housing in Waterloo that is suitable to their needs? There needs to be dwellings that are culturally appropriate and cater to the needs of families with kids.

One of the important things that might be at risk with introducing so many private residents into the community is the sense of community cohesion and solidarity, that people have. Local residents often buffer for others because they believe they are all battlers. People are quite tolerant of others' mental health issues for example. This might not be the case with progressive arrival of private residents.

Facilitators encouraged participants to get involved as much as possible with the Master Planning process and the community engagement, as a way to shape and put constraints around what the market might want to deliver in Waterloo.

While many participants are conscious that the Master Planning engagement is an opportunity to have their voice heard and plan on participating, this sparked questions in its own right. Indeed, how do you make sure that what comes out of community engagement is then delivered by developers? For example, how do we ensure that the green space planned initially is actually delivered? We know that developers often negotiate on these aspects to make more profit, and that government often lacks the political will to ensure plans based on community consultation are actually delivered.

If the Waterloo Housing stock is to be transferred to a community housing provider, this provider should be brought in early on so they can engage with the community about what needs to be done for the future of Waterloo.

### What are the conditions to make it work? – Small group discussions– Debriefing

The participants then split into three groups discussing three different themes/areas of concerns about social mix and the future of Waterloo. Each table was facilitated and had a note taker to make sure that discussions were properly recorded.

## **Table 1 - Built environment, design and management**

*Focusing on the questions of tenant participation, community engagement and accessibility*

What purpose do we built for? How can we predict the demographic?

Generally and for all social/age groups, acceptance of apartment living is increasing.

Need for dwellings to be built to be culturally appropriate and built to Aboriginal need. This is because living outside and having a yarn is particularly important to the Aboriginal community.

Dwellings that are built with best design practices are essential because the indigenous community is the most visible outside of all perhaps. We need to ensure that dwellings will be built to a high standard, as often purpose built Aboriginal housing is poorly built. Will the places have balconies and what does it mean for safety?

The level of tolerance that private residents will have for mental health issues is an area of concern as mentioned in the plenary discussion. It would be nice to see more green ON the buildings, such as in Central Park. Green spaces on roofs would also be much appreciated.

There are concerns about the price of shops that will be built on ground level under the apartments or elsewhere. Keeping prices down is essential to avoid people being priced out of their own neighbourhood. We need to think about ideas that guarantee prices will stay down, such as a 'mandate for an Aldi ' for example. Parking and accessibility of spaces will also be an issue. Should shops be located under buildings or in a central shopping centre?

There is a definite need for community rooms for people to gather, have a cuppa, etc, but management of shared spaces is an important issue. In public housing for example you tend to have a dominant person who claims the common space as their own. Is it better to locate communal spaces on top of the buildings or the bottom?

Should free internet be provided with the building? Is it too much to expect everyone to privately run wifi?

With children in the building, where can they play? Some people don't mind the noise but others do. Building specific room with soundproofing for loud activities could be an option. Thinking about how sound may travel/acoustics in the design is important.

If there are to be several developers working on Waterloo redevelopment, will this bring competition and raise standards or create different ones?

Groups of people moving through short leases rather than remaining long term will be an issue for community building.

How will the social mix be done is an essential question that still hasn't been answered. Separate buildings is more likely due to management and strata issues. The most important question then is, how do we ensure continuity of blind tenure?

'Micro informal economics' such as lending each other money for a pensioner bus ticket at \$2.50 is unlikely to work with rich people coming in, how do we keep these things going and/or deal with the consequences of this informal economy slowing down?

There is a concern that feelings of re-traumatisation might appear, due to a sense of institutionnalisation, particularly for indigenous people. Having 'designated spaces' for certain people might be an issue as it might be marginalising.

## **Table #2 - Community Living**

*Discussing questions around tenure blindness, eligibility and allocation policies for social housing tenants, and mental health services.*

To start with, participants discussed the fact that there is at least two types of private residents: renters and owner occupiers. This is important to note as private residents are often grouped together as a uniform group, which they are not. The group thought it was important to ensure that buildings include all types of dwellings (1,2,3 bedrooms) and not just one kind.

In terms of access, it's important to have a good local strategy to optimise allocations. There needs to be a conversation with community and local NGOs about how allocations happen but this hasn't yet taken place. This is because allocation are the main determinant of how people with complex needs will be able to integrate or not within the new community. We need to plan for everyone, and in particular for single people who are prevalent on Housing Pathways. Karen Walsh reminded that the Public Housing Pathways register is public, so not only it gives an idea of waiting times but also of who is on there and what their needs might be.

Participants, and in particular residents, were very critical of the concepts of emulation and role modelling from private residents to the social housing residents. Some just 'didn't see it happening' while others thought it was insulting and meant that decision makers were looking down on social housing residents. The group agreed that it was important to challenge the assumptions about private residents being better tenants/community members and that it was a prejudice in both sense of the term to social housing tenants. For example, there are already social housing residents who live in private buildings through programs such as the Community and Public Housing Leasehold program. "Do people change their behaviour because of this? Are the 'standards lifted'? No."

The group wondered how the mix of social, affordable and private building might happen, and what the configuration might be, whether in a floor by floor or building by building approach. It was agreed that issues with strata and the perceptions of how the market might react made a door by door option complicated to implement. The issues with people with high needs in particular, mean that whatever option is chosen there needs to be human services to ensure people are able to keep their tenancy. Private residents potentially focusing on social housing residents as the source of problems and pushing to 'sanitise' allocations might be an issue. That's why there will be a need for good tenancy management, which needs to be made without scapehoating social housing tenants. A crucial issue for example is what you do with high needs/dysfunctional people. Good design, more police and strong tenancy management will be important in the future community. Having said that there is also an issue with policies such as the three strike policy because strict application of this pushes people with complex needs towards homelessness. Another issue to think of is that with transfers from public housing to community housing and community development being moved in house, you lose the independent tenant support that is essential to community life. This is a concern for local NGOs and residents.

Another issue is that due to the high renter turnover, the stable part of the community will be the social housing. In one way, the allocation policy is also what can guarantee the 'social mix within social mix' by allocating elderly tenants, families, single people, etc, within one social housing building. This type of mix might also help people to age in place.

We also need to ensure however that there is no great disparity in building management, because every building having a different set of rules will increase complexity too greatly. Perhaps a system putting compatible people together could address this.

The group recommended to look at Green Square Social Impact Assessment, as a report is being done on similar issues.

To conclude the group thought it was important to recall that people buying property in an already existing neighbourhood and a socially mixed community know what they will be into, and that they should accept and appreciate the local culture and community.

### **Table #3 - Gentrification & Impact on shops and services**

Main point was recognising that a 70:30 mix inevitably leads to gentrification, which in turn determines the type of retail and services that will be brought in. Group discussion about measures that could be explored and put in place to prevent impact on social housing community:

1. Provisions being put in place that protect commercial space from market forces that drive away smaller local business, to ensure that shops are affordable and a variety of options are available to residents.
2. Use developers to explore new models of 'built to rent' to stabilise the rental market and the turnover of the community. Longer lease periods than currently in place.
3. Use developers to provide opportunities for social enterprises, start-ups, resources for business development.
4. Advocating for increase in Aboriginal affordable housing, preserving the cultural history of the community/estate.
5. Final question – will Community Housing Providers own the land or not? Owning the land may allow them to invest in better management of the properties, i.e. cleaning and maintenance as well as what facilities might be created out the redevelopment.

Other areas for discussion included:

- Working class heritage of the estate should be acknowledged and preserved – links to point 1 above. And consideration should be given to preserving Waterloo Green as well as Matavai and Turanga (or refurbishment).
- In guarding against gentrification constraints should be put in place around developers on what is being built/provided in the buildings in terms of BBQ area, pools, gyms, and gardens so that people are forced to share communal facilities rather than being exclusive. There was a point that these might attract a different type of 'rich person' coming into the estate.
- Medical services or centres need to be bulk billing so they are accessible for residents – and measures put in place to encourage existing services to stay beyond the redevelopment. Taking this further public and private health care being co-located for different cohorts of the community.
- Riverwood redevelopment example: LAHC and Fairfield Council using the CHP and private developer (SGCH and PAYCE in this case) negotiating a new library and a community centre out of the redevelopment given the demographics of the current estate. Links to point 5.

### **Conclusion**

Participants reported back to the whole group about the main points they discussed within their groups and what was the most important thing to take away from today's community discussion. It was recognised that many things were still unknown and that for residents to reflect on the best way to implement social mix within the Waterloo community, there was a need to know more about the plans of government.



It was reminded that release of Options for the Waterloo Redevelopment is planned for the next eight to ten weeks, depending on release date of the 'Visioning Report' and that residents will have a chance to discuss the future of their community and neighbourhood with NSW Government then. Residents were encouraged to take their ideas and ambitions for the future of the neighbourhood to the next phase of community engagement of Waterloo Master Planning process.



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