

UNEMPLOYED PEOPLES EMBASSY presentation to Public Meeting

1. Our organisation has always opposed the Pemulwuy Project – even if it were to be funded by Govt grants. Location of ethnic based “Aboriginal Housing” in the Redfern Block area was being slowly demolished by neglect and deliberately poor management by the AHC for decades. The number of accommodation units proposed to be reconstructed was less than half of those in the original Block anyway
2. We have long advocated publicly that such an ethically mixed Social Housing mini-estate for such English speaking citizens should be moved to a low-rise housing area away from intrusion from major railway stations. Such previous “transfers” (ie by eviction to ensure priority social housing) of a number of former Block residents, especially to local public housing estates – seems to have improved their lives, though no research on this appears to have been published yet.
3. The current Pemulwuy “plan” was ferociously opposed by the local community – when it was first revealed at a public meeting held years ago at Redfern Community Centre. The sudden over doubling of the commercial “student” rental housing component with a 16 storey high rise along the former Pemulwuy Park and School area - shocked and dismayed the wider community so much, that the meeting was closed. SMH report on 14 November claims a 24 storey height for student housing.

OPPOSITION TO APPROVAL OF CURRENT AHC PROPOSAL THROUGH “STATE SIGNIFICANCE”

4. The AHC redevelopment proposal has totally crossed its own definition of being about its definition of “Aboriginal” housing – so that the name of Pemulwuy should be taken off it. Indeed, for years the AHC has been promoting itself as being about business development rather than for social housing (not Comm Housing provider).
5. The Whitlam grant allocation required an AHC to be set up to manage it – with various criticisms surfacing in public ever since (eg on ABC TV), about its ability to do so properly. It was well known as having a poor record in maintaining the previous Block housing and apparent lack of control over who occupied it and paid rent.
6. The current AHC Project, claims to subsidise the rebuilt Social Housing mini-estate rents – with leasing new commercial shops in the area. The newly reported 600 overwhelmingly non “Aboriginal” students - renting temporary uni student accommodation in the 16 plus storey proposed High Rise towers (on 99 year leased land) will completely change the character of the remaining low-rise neighbourhood. The long-time Aboriginal association with the Block won’t survive this huge invasion.
7. What assurance is there in any case, that the presumably lump sum payments made for the proposed 99 year lease – for the land to build the private company commercial student accommodation high-rise, will indeed be used properly to build the proposed social housing mini-estate in the north end of the now vacant Block? A lengthy delay in commencing that build - supposedly to accommodate the original families, will raise suspicions that further high-rise constructions will go there instead with NO “affordable housing” in it (see SHM report). Any Approvals must be delayed for years, so that alternative proposals for the AHC Block site can be considered.

8. The current situation for the Block is that a major music Festival is taking place there on 24 November including the adjoining Redfern Community Centre. Such catered music events and Aboriginal movie night-time outdoor premiers were a regular event on the vacated Block land with the monthly Family and Community days – before a wire fence was put around the area some years ago. Such events will no longer be possible once the AHC land 99 year “sell-off” and shops/gyn/mini-estate (?) redevelopment starts. The current vacant Block area should be made a park.
9. The invasion of 600 or more, mostly foreign students in the 16 (or 24) storey commercial high-rise temporary accommodation – often with poor English skills, will connect the new Block more with Haymarket than with greater Redfern or Waterloo suburbs. Our proposal is that any low-rise shops/galleries are put along the *Land* instead of the currently proposed for the 99 year lease High Rise, still displaying the Aboriginal murals along the railway line way. That, with an Aboriginal Modern Political History museum – probably starting in the recently vacated Mundine Gym, would enhance the cultural capacity of the area, later perhaps on the *Land*, instead.
10. The supposed justification for the 99 year lease to fund rebuilding a supposed low rise ethnic “Aboriginal” mini social housing estate down the back of the Block – will not required if such an estate is instead built away from the disastrous close access to major Rail Stations at Redfern and Central. There is already a suitably sized public housing estate on Henderson Rd (corner Progress Rd) past the Technogym Park – not far from Erskineville station. We have also been advocating in the last couple of years, at public meeting held about the Waterloo public housing estate redevelopment – that the Aboriginal community now living there, be included in ethnic community housing plans. Already the ethnic Chinese and Russian mini estate communities are being included in the “mixed housing” redevelopment.

CONCLUSIONS:

11. No approvals should be given to the AHC 99 lease 16/24 storey commercial student accommodation proposal in the Block area. The current vacated grassed over Block open-space area - should be developed as a public park, managed by a reputable and democratically run Aboriginal based NGO. Also a modern Aboriginal Political History museum should be developed – at least initially in the vacated Mundine Gym.
12. The 99 year lease high-rise proposal is supposedly only a means to raise upfront money to re-build a greatly scaled down mini – estate, for the original ethnic Aboriginal families formally living there. This would apparently still need to be rent subsidised by also building commercial shops up the south end of the Block area. Such shops would more likely cater to the 600 or more mostly foreign students living in the 99 year leased high-completely change the Redfern Community Centre’s mission.
13. With the mini housing estate moved elsewhere around the local area, properly funded with community housing grants – the AHC no longer needs to lease off the ex-Pemulwuy Park and School area for 99 years to construct intrusive high-rise accommodation for foreign visa Uni students. No “State Significance” approval should be given for building commercial high rise temporary accommodation AHC Block.

