



COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA

PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES



HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Federation Chamber

CONSTITUENCY STATEMENTS

**Parramatta Electorate: North
Parramatta Heritage Precinct**

SPEECH

Thursday, 19 March 2015

BY AUTHORITY OF THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

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Questioner
Speaker Owens, Julie, MP

Source House
Proof No
Responder
Question No.

Ms OWENS (Parramatta) (09:42): There is a growing disbelief and indeed anger in my community about the state government's plans to redevelop the North Parramatta heritage precinct. The planning process has been, shall we say, more for show than substance, with the very brief period over the Christmas break for people to have a look at the plans. But, when we look at the plans, we all incredibly appalled.

The north Parramatta precinct contains some 70 heritage buildings; it contains more heritage buildings than the Rocks; it contains three buildings from the 1700s; and it has been in public hands since colonisation. In fact, it is the best collection of colonial history in Australia, by far. It contains the Female Convict Factory, designed by Greenway—the first convict factory in Australia. It contains the Gipps Yard, where convict women were taken straight from the boat and put to work on their first day. It contains the Roman Catholic Orphanage, where the children of those convict women were kept right back in the early colonial years.

When you look at the plan this government have, you see that it is essentially to sell off this land. They claim that they are selling the land in order to fund their heritage work. For some reason, North Parramatta has to be self-contained when it comes to heritage; whereas the rest of the county seems to think that maintaining our heritage is actually a national responsibility. But, for North Parramatta, the land itself has to cover the cost of maintaining some of the most significant heritage buildings in the country.

What they are really doing is selling it off. They are selling the land inside Gipps Yard and putting a six-storey and a 12-storey building inside the yard where the convict women were first taken—an intact courtyard where the convict women lived and worked. They are selling the land which includes Australia's first children's hospital, a beautiful little building that looks like a chocolate box. There will be a 12-storey building within metres of it. They are putting a 12-storey building within 50 metres of an endangered flying fox species.

It is an extraordinary land grab: 6,000 residential units going up on what is Australia's most significant heritage precinct, without any consideration of how those people get in or out of the area, without any consideration of the schooling needs, but particularly without any plans whatsoever about how these heritage buildings are going to be protected. Quite a few of them are not on the national register; in fact, most of them are not on the National Trust Register. The state government has resisted putting them on that because, in the words of one of the local members, 'Heritage listing impedes development'. Yes, it does, and, yes, it should. In this case, our colonial heritage should not be sold off for the cheapest price to fill the coffers of the state government so they can spend it elsewhere. It is national heritage, and it should be protected. I urge the state government to rethink.