



COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA

PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES



HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Federation Chamber

CONSTITUENCY STATEMENTS

Ryan Electorate: Witton Barracks site

SPEECH

Wednesday, 12 August 2015

BY AUTHORITY OF THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

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Questioner
Speaker Prentice, Jane, MP

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Mrs PRENTICE (Ryan) (10:33): I rise today to talk about the Witton Barracks site at Indooroopilly, in my electorate of Ryan.

The Department of Defence has recently announced that they are going to dispose of this site as they do not have any future needs for it. However, this site is very special to the local community. It has a lot of history, as well as providing the opportunity for local facilities so needed in that area. I am delighted that Darren Chester, the parliamentary secretary, recently came and met me on site with local councillor, Julian Simmonds. Julian Simmonds has worked with the Brisbane City Council to put together a submission to the department as to why this site should be given, or sold at concessional rate, to the Brisbane City Council so it can use the site for the local community—for the residents of Indooroopilly. I appreciate that the Defence department wants to make money on behalf of taxpayers who originally bought the site, but equally those same taxpayers are the ratepayers and the residents of Indooroopilly.

This site has many special attributes. Primarily it is an historic site. These are the barracks where there are the only remaining prisoner of war cells left in Australia. These are the prisoner of war cells where prisoners were brought for interrogation during the Second World War. Those cells are still there, so there is an opportunity to create an historical military museum on the site.

It is also in the same place as the Walter Taylor Bridge, a very famous bridge that is tragically getting on in years and above capacity. The Walter Taylor Bridge is a suspension bridge. In fact, the cables that hold it up were once used to pull the Sydney Harbour Bridge span together. Walter Taylor very cleverly used those cables to save money in building bridge. But the bridge is rapidly nearing capacity, if it is not already over it, and because of its nature it is only two single lanes, so it is impossible to expand. The council has already acquired land from the other side of the river at Chelmer, and the obvious place for a new river crossing to land would be on this side of the site.

At the same time, Indooroopilly is one of the oldest suburbs in my area. It has been listed by the state government as a principal site, meaning that buildings in redevelopment can go to 10 and 20 storeys high, but because it is an old suburb there are no real parks and recreational areas. So once again there is a great opportunity to provide green space and a park for the local residents. I am delighted that the council has taken this up through Councillor Julian Simmonds. I call on the federal government to work with the council for the outcomes that we need for the residents of Indooroopilly and for the best outcome for the local people.