



COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA

PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES



HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Federation Chamber

CONSTITUENCY STATEMENTS

**Uren, Hon. Thomas, AC,
Sydney Electorate: Millers Point**

SPEECH

Monday, 9 February 2015

BY AUTHORITY OF THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

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Questioner
Speaker Plibersek, Tanya, MP

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Ms PLIBERSEK (Sydney—Deputy Leader of the Opposition) (10:29): A few weeks ago, we said goodbye to one of Sydney's great champions, former Minister for Urban and Regional Development in the Whitlam government, Tom Uren. Tom was a dear friend of mine. Tom's passionate commitment to our urban environment has left an enduring legacy in the preservation of our heritage through such steps as the establishment of the Australian Heritage Commission, through the conservation of Sydney Harbour foreshore and through his vision for the restoration and invigoration of working class, inner city areas. As Sydney's representative in the federal parliament, I am particularly conscious of just how much we owe Tom. The face of our city and the survival of the working class communities within inner city areas are down to Tom. We no longer have Tom to fight for the heritage, the diversity and the communities of Sydney. But the fight does, and must, go on.

Right now, one of the oldest working class communities in Sydney, Millers Point, is under threat by a state Liberal government which is putting profit before people. The Millers Point community has its roots in the 19th century in the boom and bust years that led to the Great Maritime Strike in the 1890s. It sits above the Hungry Mile where workers used to queue to be allowed to work for a few hours on the docks. Bound together by shared labour, shared values and shared hardship for more than a century, Millers Point is a unique and tightly-knit community. It has residents who have lived for four generations in the one home, whose families have been there for more than 100 years. It is a vital part of our city's living history.

It has always been a source of great pride for me as the member for Sydney that our magnificent harbour city is not closed to the poor or to the working class, that we have public housing in the heart of our great city and that we do not push less wealthy residents to the fringes of the city. The community at Millers Point is an important part of our diverse, vibrant Sydney. Its destruction would be short-sighted, hard-hearted and wrong. These proposed moves are causing the residents of Millers Point great stress. The fear that they have about being moved out of the community they know, away from neighbours they are familiar with, away from health services and other vital community services that they depend on has been enormously stressful. One of the great things about our city, one of the things that distinguishes it from any other major capitals around the world, is the diversity of its communities. You see that particularly in Millers Point. You see it in Glebe and in Woolloomooloo. You see it in those areas that Tom, as the former Minister for Urban and Regional Development, made it his particular priority to protect.