

# Sydney beset by bad ideas

**Paul Nicolaou**



**C**ouncils and government authorities are prone to contemplating controversial choices where everyone else just wants to shout, don't do it.

Federal moves to sell off Victoria Barracks and a City of Sydney project to demolish the commercial heart of the CBD for a bigger town hall plaza are two classic examples of this.

There is no shortage of opposition to both and Business Sydney is part of the chorus of concern. It's not only Victoria Barracks' 175-year heritage at stake, but also the contemporary national security role of the Australian Army.

The site plays a vital part in the training of troops. It could do so much more than its role as a base for special forces to respond to a

terrorist attack in the city.

Business Sydney applauds state member for Coogee Dr Marjorie O'Neill for campaigning against the Victoria Barracks sale. She joins former Australian Army chief Ken Gillespie and NSW RSL president, retired brigadier Vincent Williams in speaking out. Premier Chris Minns should support Dr O'Neill.

Another compelling reason is the St Vincent's Hospital heart and lung transplant team uses Victoria Barracks for helicopter transfers in support of the life-saving program.

City of Sydney plans to demolish seven buildings, including the popular Woolworths, in favour of a big plaza opposite the town hall is another unfortunate scheme.

Demolition of the council-owned buildings would

not just mean the CBD loses a big retailer and one of only two full-service supermarkets. It would also hurt small businesses that survived the pandemic, but won't survive the plaza.

The police must also think it's a particularly bad idea. It will be more open space for protests that continually disrupt CBD businesses. Protests should be restricted to the Sydney Domain.

It's time for a rethink on the Victoria Barracks sale and the town hall plaza.

Time won't reduce the opposition. If anything, it will only harden.

**Paul Nicolaou is executive director of Business Sydney**