

# Why won't our polities listen?

**Paul Nicolaou**



**I**t's a worrying trend when elected officials seem disinclined to listen or stay mute as pressure mounts against their controversial decisions. This see-no-evil, hear-no-evil approach is apparent in relation to so many issues across all three tiers of government.

The federal government retreated on controversial budget measures only after an open rebellion by business and the rise of One Nation.

All three tiers seem determined to plough on with unpopular choices. Among them, Commonwealth moves to sell off Victoria Barracks, the spiritual and operational home of the Australian Army.

At a state level, the planned closure of Glebe Island, Sydney Harbour's last deepwater port and a nationally significant

strategic asset, to accommodate luxury waterfront housing with the loss of critical infrastructure that can't be replaced.

And there's the City of Sydney accelerating plans to demolish the commercial heart of the CBD to replace it with an unnecessary Town Hall square, another venue for protests that already disrupt the city.

Each initiative comes with inadequate consultation, where authorities remain silent amid the mounting furore.

Canberra appears determined to dispose of Victoria Barracks.

But prominent in a newly formed coalition to resist the sale are state Labor MP for Coogee Dr Marjorie O'Neill, state Liberal MP for Manly James Griffin and federal independent for Wentworth, Allegra Spender.

On the Town Hall square, the

council is pressing ahead even though CBD businesses will be uprooted and services lost when they are needed to encourage sensible development that would see more people living in the heart of the city.

The only solution is for Chris Minns and Planning Minister Paul Scully to declare that the square will not proceed, so that the precinct can be developed as a commercial hub, creating businesses and jobs.

It's time all tiers of government made listening a priority and recognised when they've got it wrong.

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