



Dr Marjorie O'Neill MP

MEMBER FOR COOGEE

5th of February 2026

The Hon. Richard Marles MP
Deputy Prime Minister & Minister for Defence

Dear Richard Marles MP,

Re: The Federal Government's proposal to sell Victoria Barracks

I am writing to express my deep concern regarding the Federal Government's proposed sale of Victoria Barracks, Sydney, and to urge that this decision be immediately reconsidered.

Victoria Barracks, Sydney is not surplus land, nor is it a disposable asset. It is one of Australia's most important military, operational, and heritage sites, with a continuous history dating back to the 1840s. Built using convict labour and local sandstone, it has served for nearly two centuries as a centre of military leadership, administration, and national service.

From the earliest days of colonial forces, through Federation, and into the modern Australian Defence Force, Victoria Barracks has played a central role in shaping Australia's defence capability and national identity. Generations of service men and women have passed through its gates, and its buildings and grounds stand as a living record of their service and sacrifice.

Today, Victoria Barracks, Sydney remains a strategically significant operational and command hub with national-level responsibilities extending well beyond New South Wales.

Most notably, it is the home of Headquarters Forces Command, which is responsible for the generation of Army capability and oversees the training of more than one-third of the Australian Army. This headquarters is fundamental to ensuring Australia's forces are prepared for domestic and international operations.

The Barracks also houses the Military Law Centre, which provides professional education and development for legal officers across the Australian Defence Force, underpinning military justice and the lawful conduct of operations.

It is home to Headquarters 2nd Health Brigade, which commands all Army health capabilities, including deployable medical units, clinical governance, and operational health preparedness. This headquarters plays a vital role in sustaining the force and caring for personnel across training, deployment, and recovery.

Victoria Barracks, Sydney further accommodates the Army Battle Lab, which develops and tests future doctrine and warfighting concepts, ensuring the Army adapts to emerging threats and technologies.

In addition, the precinct hosts the Australian Army Band – Sydney, supporting ceremonial, commemorative, and community events, and the Army Personnel Service Unit – Sydney, which provides critical welfare and administrative support to Defence members and their families.

Coogee Electorate Office:

A: 15/53-55B Frenchmans Rd, Randwick NSW 2031, Australia

P: (02) 9398 1822 **F:** (02) 9398 1044 **E:** coogee@parliament.nsw.gov.au

W: marjorieoneill.com.au **f:** [MarjorieONeillCoogeeMP](https://www.facebook.com/MarjorieONeillCoogeeMP) **t:** [@MarjorieSONeill](https://twitter.com/MarjorieSONeill) **o:** [marjorieoneillcoogee](https://www.instagram.com/marjorieoneillcoogee)





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The site also includes residential accommodation for ADF families, making it not only a place of work but a living Defence community that supports stability, readiness, and continuity of service.

Importantly, Victoria Barracks, Sydney contains substantial existing infrastructure, including a large carpark and available space capable of supporting expanded Defence occupancy. **This presents a clear opportunity to relocate personnel currently housed in leased commercial accommodation at Defence Plaza Sydney, which costs taxpayers tens of millions of dollars annually. Consolidating these functions within Victoria Barracks, Sydney would reduce long-term estate expenditure, eliminate costly commercial leasing, and strengthen organisational cohesion by co-locating command, training, health, legal, personnel, and enabling functions on a Defence-owned site.**

Beyond its operational importance, Victoria Barracks, Sydney is also one of the finest surviving examples of colonial military architecture in Australia, including one of the longest sandstone structures in the Southern Hemisphere. It houses significant military collections and heritage assets that preserve and share Australia's defence history with the public.

This site represents far more than bricks and mortar. It is the spiritual home of the Australian Army and tells the story of our journey from colony to nation, our participation in global conflicts, and the enduring commitment of Australians to serve their country. It is a place of remembrance, education, and national pride. To sell Victoria Barracks for short-term budget gains would be deeply irresponsible. It risks placing this irreplaceable national asset in private hands, limiting public access, weakening heritage protections, and prioritising commercial interests over the public good.

Our history should never be balanced away on a spreadsheet. Once a place of this significance is sold, it is lost forever to the Australian people.

Any proposal to divest or repurpose Victoria Barracks must fully account for the complexity, interdependence, national importance, and fiscal value of the capabilities housed there, as well as the substantial cost, risk, and disruption associated with relocating them.

I therefore call on the Federal Government to halt the proposed sale and commit to keeping Victoria Barracks, Sydney in public ownership. I further urge the Government to work with local communities, veterans' organisations, historians, and heritage experts to develop a long-term stewardship model that protects the site and enhances its public value.

This is about honouring service, respecting our shared history, maintaining critical Defence capability, and recognising that some places are simply too important to sell. Victoria Barracks, Sydney must remain in the care of the Australian people.

Yours sincerely,

Dr Marjorie O'Neill
Member for Coogee

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