



COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA

PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES



HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Federation Chamber

CONSTITUENCY STATEMENTS

**Corio Electorate: Geelong
Western Public Cemetery**

SPEECH

Wednesday, 25 November 2015

BY AUTHORITY OF THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

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Speaker Marles, Richard, MP	Question No.

Mr MARLES (Corio) (10:18): In August 2011, I spoke to this place about the significance of our heritage in our local cemeteries. When you visit these places and read the headstones, you see lives that have been lived, achievements that have been made and people who have been loved. Beautiful headstones speak to the sorrow and loss of husbands and wives, the unbearable grief of parents and the sadness—and ultimately the pride—of children who have buried their loved ones in these places. These are sacred places to our communities. They tell the story of our local history.

There is one particular cemetery that I want to speak to this place about today, and that is Geelong Western Public Cemetery, which is one of the oldest cemeteries in the Geelong region and in my electorate. It was established in the 1850s and was laid out by Christopher Porter. Its plantings were supplied by Baron von Mueller. It is one of the most significant cemeteries in the state of Victoria.

In this cemetery lies Willem Baa:Ni:ip, who was born in 1836 and died in 1885, otherwise known as 'King Billy'. He was the last of the Indigenous Barrabool tribe. He fought for the right of his people to live on their land. He saw in his lifetime Geelong develop from a small camp, really, to a major agricultural centre. Today, he is an enormously significant figure in Geelong, and particularly amongst the Wathaurong people. My office spoke this morning with Reg Abrahams, the cultural adviser of the Wathaurong, who said that he was an enormously significant figure and that his place needs to be preserved.

It is also a cemetery which houses Fanny Brownbill, who in 1938 succeeded her husband as the member for Geelong and became the first female Labor member of the Victorian parliament. She was a president of the then Matthew Flinders Girls School and she helped establish Grace McKellar House. Also buried in this cemetery is Allan Couzens and his father, Stan Couzens. Allan, who died in 1980, was the husband of the current member for Geelong, Christine Couzens.

So it is with enormous concern that I raise the issue of a Telstra tower which is sought to be built in the middle of the western cemetery. Last week, a seven-person panel of the City of Greater Geelong unanimously decided, after 371 objections, to oppose this. But today, it is reported in the *Geelong Advertiser* that Telstra plan to appeal this decision through the Victorian Civil and Administrative Tribunal. I add my voice to those locals against this. I urge Telstra not to go through with the appeal. It is an error of judgement on their part, and they need to listen to their community.