

A narrow view of the bigger picture

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EVERYONE is familiar with the acronym NIMBY - Not In My Backyard. It has particular resonance in Sydney, where development is routinely opposed by those concerned with the effects on their properties and neighbourhoods.

Sometimes that concern is justified. Often, however, it is generated by a broad inclination to shun any form of change, even when it would be to the overall betterment of our city.

In the wake of new opposition to the proposed floating helipad in Sydney Harbour, we may need a new acronym. Perhaps NIMPS - Not In My Precious Scenery - will do.

Our harbour is a shared resource, offering the world's greatest views to all Sydney residents and visitors. It is a natural marvel. But historically it is also a working harbour, featuring ports and factories. Considering the amount of ferry traffic and other transportation that use the harbour, it could also be thought of as Sydney's main road.

The planned addition of a helipad to that road has excited the disapproval of many with an interest in maintaining the harbour's present state. Those with properties facing the harbour have an obvious motivation to reject the helipad.

All relevant authorities have approved the helipad, which if it proceeds will first do so as a 12-month trial. As Deputy Premier Andrew Stoner points out, such a facility is overdue in Sydney, which is one of the few world cities without a CBD heliport.

Dispute over the helipad is similar in tone to disputes over a second airport. Instead of worrying about harbour views, progress opponents should look at the big picture.

Our own gun culture

IN shock at last Friday's bloody Connecticut school atrocity, the US may finally be moving towards meaningful change to its gun laws. Even the National Rifle Association seems open to negotiation.

These are positive steps, but we in Sydney also have a gun problem, made horrifically clear by the murder late on Tuesday night of Bachir Arja of Punchbowl. Three weeks ago, Arja's relative Ali Eid was also gunned down. These crimes come amid a spate of drive-by shootings in Sydney's west.

Just as the US knows that the time to act on guns is now, so does Premier Barry O'Farrell, whose government is planning a raft of new gun regulations.

These are sensible measures that should bring further control over firearms in our community. Drive-by shootings and the targeted killings of Sydney citizens are another matter, however. The lawless already feel no obligation to follow existing gun rules and won't be constrained by additional legislation. In these cases, politicians and courts must back police to bring perpetrators to their full measure of justice.