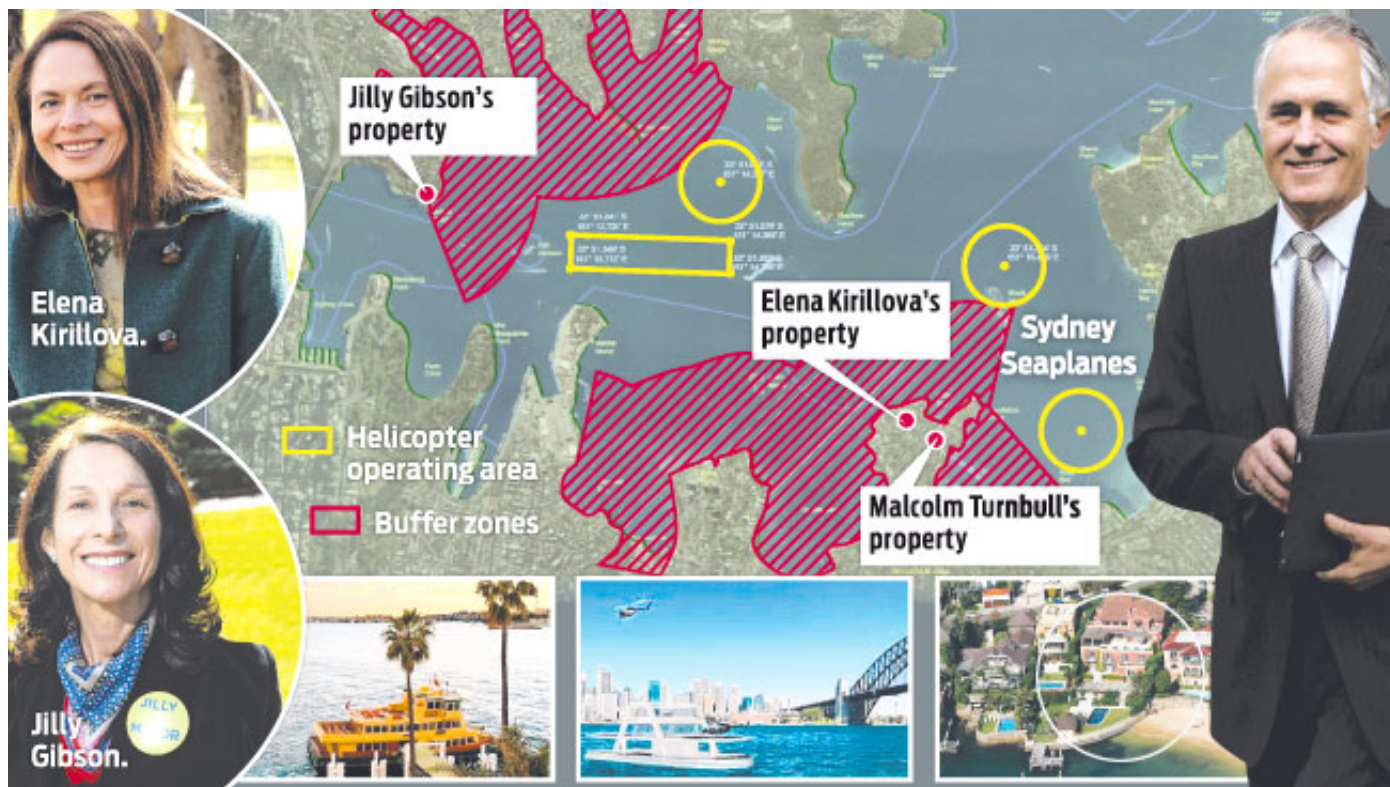


Sorry Premier, not in my pad



Source: The Daily Telegraph

TOGETHER they stand accused of blatant NIMBYism: Looking after their own backyard under the guise of representing their voters.

The three most ardent and vocal campaigners against Premier Barry O'Farrell's heliport proposal share one telling feature - their homes boast magnificent harbour views close to the heliport zones.

Federal MP Malcolm Turnbull, his Point Piper neighbour and Woollahra councillor Elena Kirillova, and North Sydney mayor Jilly Gibson will have front row seats for the new heliport.

Despite being buzzed by as many as 60 seaplane flights a day in summer - some directly over his \$15 million Point Piper mansion - Mr Turnbull has hit out at the new proposal, claiming it would pose a safety risk to the hundreds of sailors, kayakers and fishermen.

He vehemently denied self-interest was at the heart of his objection to the year-long trial, arguing it was not a battle between silvertails and battlers.

"There's a lot more people in tinnies on the harbour than there are millionaires on yachts," Mr Turnbull said.

"Think of the sunny Saturday afternoon when there's a cracking nor-easter, hundreds of people on the harbour sailing and swimming, and you have helicopters trying to land on a platform bobbing up and down in the chop.

"That seems to be a pretty questionable thing to do to me."

Mr Turnbull said it was disappointing the O'Farrell government had approved the plan without bothering to consult the affected council and interest groups.

North Sydney mayor Jilly Gibson, whose beautiful Kirribilli apartment overlooks the primary heliport zone, said the constant noise would drive away more visitors from the harbour than it attracted. "It's far from self interest. North Sydney municipality is lucky to have beautiful parks and foreshore walks and we encourage visitors from the rest of Sydney, Australia and overseas to enjoy them so its not just about the locals who live here," Ms Gibson said.

Woollahra councillor Elena Kirillova, who lives on Wolseley Rd, Point Piper - Sydney's most exclusive street - also rejected the notion that the opposition was driven by NIMBYism.

Entrepreneur Dick Smith, who once flew around the world in a helicopter and is a former Civil Aviation Safety Authority chairman, dismissed safety fears.

"People forget Rene Rivkin had one on his boat in the harbour - it was quite a novelty back then," he said.

"There was no problem with downdraft. People in other boats would just move a bit away, let the helicopter land or take-off, then move back again."

A Civil Aviation Safety Authority spokesman said it was preparing advice for the Roads and Maritime Service about the safety and operational issues of the facility.

The Boating Industry Association said it had no concerns about the floating helicopter pads.

Tourism and Transport Forum chief executive John Lee, who first proposed the float-

ing heliport as part of *The Daily Telegraph's* People's Plan, said it was still a working harbour "not a private millpond".

"The proposed harbour heliport is a positive move for Sydney and it would be a shame if the interests of a small number of people were able to trump the best interests of the NSW visitor economy," he said.