



COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA

PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES



**HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES**

**PROOF**

**ADJOURNMENT**

**SPEECH**

**Tuesday, 2 June 2009**

BY AUTHORITY OF THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

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## SPEECH

**Date** Tuesday, 2 June 2009  
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**Questioner**  
**Speaker** Ciobo, Steven, MP

**Source** House  
**Proof** Yes  
**Responder**  
**Question No.**

**Mr CIOBO** (Moncrieff) (10.59 pm)—There can be very little in life that is more troubling than not knowing what happened to your father, to your mother—or indeed to both. So this evening I rise to present, on behalf of 1,295 Australians, a series of petitions calling on the Rudd Labor government to finance a search for the *Montevideo Maru*. In 2003 I tabled a petition from 475 Australians that drew the attention of the House to the tragedy of the *Montevideo Maru*. The sinking of the *Montevideo Maru* is Australia's worst maritime tragedy. There were 845 Australian POWs and around 208 civilians who died when the Japanese POW vessel was sunk as it sailed from New Britain to Japan. The ship, which was bearing no markings to show it was carrying prisoners of war, was sunk by the USS *Sturgeon*, an American submarine, approximately 100 kilometres off the coast of Cape Luzon in the Philippines. I understand, and it is reputed, that an uncle of the former member for Brand, Kim Beazley, was believed to have lost his life on the *Montevideo Maru*. Indeed, I am led to believe that a grandfather of the Minister for the Environment, Heritage and the Arts, Mr Garrett, was also believed to have perished aboard this ship.

The three petitions that I will table in a moment include, as I said, the names of some 1,295 Australians who have banded together to call on the Rudd government to help finance this search. Cynthia Schmidt, the principal petitioner, has dedicated her life to trying to find out what happened to her father, to trying to find out what happened to the *Montevideo Maru*—and ultimately, of course, to bring closure in this sense. I have certainly been very proud to support them in this ongoing campaign since I was elected in 2001. I know there are many members on both sides of the House who support them in their quest to have closure, who support them in their quest to know exactly what happened to the *Montevideo Maru*. When you look at the great sense of relief there was when the HMAS *Sydney* was located and, for many people, the ability to pay their due respects, you can certainly understand that for those who lost their loved ones, for those who lost their fathers, with the sinking of the *Montevideo Maru* the ability to finally have closure

will be a great sense of relief for them. In that vein, Mr Speaker, I table the petitions.

*The petitions read as follows—*

To the Honourable Speaker and Members of the House of Representatives.

The petition of certain residents of the Country of ... draws to the attention of the House the need to arrive at the truth of the events involving the *Montevideo Maru* and the fate of 845 POW and 208 internees from The Mandated Territory of New Guinea [now Papua New Guinea], said to be on board when the vessel was sunk.

Your petitioners therefore request the House to support any investigation made to establish the truth relative to the identity of the ship torpedoed 1 July 1942 in the Philippine waters and alleged to have been the *Montevideo Maru*.

from 913 citizens

Petition received.

To the Honourable Speaker and Members of the House of Representatives.

The petition of certain residents of the State of draws ... to the attention of the House to have interested people expressing a desire to arrive at the truth of what happened during the Japanese occupation on the on the Island of New Britain, New Ireland, Watom Island and surrounding Islands in The Mandated Territory of New Guinea [now Papua New Guinea].

Your petitioners therefore request the House to an investigation by the relatives to request the Australian and Papua New Guinea governments discover all burial places of service men, Missionaries and civilians still missing. The families of these men have a right to know where they are buried.

from 356 citizens

Petition received.

To the Honourable Speaker and Members of the House of Representatives assembled in Parliament:

The petition of certain residents of ... draws to the attention of the House to have interested people expressing a desire to arrive at the truth of what happened during the Japanese occupation on the Island of New Britain, New Ireland, Watom Island and surrounding Islands in the Mandated Territory of New Guinea (now Papua New Guinea).

Your petitioners therefore request the House to support an investigation by the relatives to request the Australian and

Papua New Guinea governments to discover all burial places of service men and civilians still missing. The families of these men have a right to know where they are buried.

from 26 citizens

Petition received.