

Tonight we join you on the 80th anniversary of the D-Day invasions which marked the beginning of Operation Overlord, and turned the tide of the Second World War. Tonight, at 9pm, a lone piper from the Canberra Pipes and Drums will stand in front of the newly replaced Stone of Remembrance on our new Parade Ground and play, in concert with pipers around the world, in memory of the men who took part in the landings.

Today also marks the 55th anniversary of the Battle of Binh Ba. Vietnam veterans experienced a diverse range of responses when they returned. We want them to know that we appreciate their service and we remember them.

On 29 May, here in Parliament House, we announced the winner of this year's Napier Waller Art Prize. Kat Rae's thought provoking work *Deathmin* comprises stacked paper, vinyl, plastic, leather and metal representing the "stack of post-death admin" the artist inherited after her veteran husband Andrew suicided in 2017. This piece is relevant, powerful and honest. It echoes the statement of Lord Gowrie when he opened the Memorial that people must commit to "never again". Kat's work, in a contemporary settings asks us to reaffirm "never again". We are honoured to support this exceptional prize and the work it does in allowing veterans a voice.

On Anzac Day, we were honoured to host the Veterans' March on our new Parade Ground. This was an important promise that we delivered; that veterans would be the first to use the Parade Ground as the first package of work delivered by the Development Project. The primary purpose of the project is to create space to the stories of modern service so it was fitting that the inaugural address was contemporary veteran Damien Thomlinson. Approximately 1,200 veterans marched for 5,600 spectators. On 17 May, the Stone of Remembrance was relocated from its temporary home in the Sculpture Garden back to the Parade Ground. This completes the Parade Ground and while we celebrate this significant milestone we are also looking ahead to our milestones for the next year: the reopening of the Heritage entrance, opening of the new Southern Entrance and our new Research Centre in the CEW Bean Building.

Also in April, the Australian National Audit Office tabled their report on Management of the Australian War Memorial's Development Project. The ANAO were provided with 4 terrabytes of data, including hundreds of thousands of documents, emails, drawings, procurement and contract materials. In support of this fieldwork, Memorial staff responded to 191 formal Requests of Information requiring some 750 hours of staff time to administer. The Memorial welcomed the report which found the Memorial was "largely effective" across the 3 identified scope areas and included 5 recommendations for improvements towards best practice. All of the recommendations were accepted and have been implemented.

On the morning of our last appearance, 14 February, we launched our new website tool *Transcribe* to assist us in transcribing hand written documents from the National Collection. Since the launch, 28,000 volunteers have transcribed more than 3 million words in collections of documents. Each document that is transcribed is more discoverable and more accessible for all Australians via the Memorial website. We look forward to further phases of this very successful project.

The Memorial continues to be destination of choice for dignitaries visiting Canberra, both military and other significant visitors. These visits, from Heads of State to heads of services of allied nations, alongside ongoing strong visitation from the public, speaks to the ongoing relevance of our beautiful heritage building that houses a shrine, museum and archive. While timed ticketing is still in place for the time being to manage building capacity, we look forward to removing the occupancy caps over

the next year or so. This is dependant, as always, on expert advice from fire and evacuation specialists.

The Australian War Memorial continues to be a place where people of all nationalities and all stations in life come to understand Australia and Australians. I am proud and humbled to brief this Committee again and describe the wonderful work we are doing.