

Submission to Public Works Committee of the Australian Parliament.

Australian War Memorial Development Project

I write to oppose the Australian War Memorial's \$498 million expansion program.

The AWM has been treated more generously by previous governments than other national institutions, to the extent that it is tempted to turn itself from a sombre memorial to a kind of theme park. As Charles Bean recommended in the original design for the building, "The national memorial building should not be colossal in scale but rather a gem of its kind." This latest extension may be seen as a tipping point away from these ideals to giving it a status in a different league than important national institutions such as the National Library, National Museum and National Gallery, all facing difficulties maintaining their core functions.

The extra space is largely to display the large weapons of war of recent conflicts, further altering the character of the Museum into something that glamorizes war in the minds of children, rather than allowing sombre reflection on it. It will entail the demolition of Anzac Hall, itself a prize-winning recent addition to the Museum. All museums rotate their holdings so that only a small proportion are seen at any one time. In the AWM's case it is much more appropriate that these very large items be stored in some warehouse which can be visited by researchers or special interest groups, rather than changing the character of the War Memorial.

The 'national' character of the AWM is further distorted with every expansion of it into a kind of theme park of the weapons of war. By ignoring the most tragic of the many tragic wars in which Australians have engaged, the defence of the country by its indigenous inhabitants throughout the nineteenth century, it further risks misleading children into imagining that the destructiveness of war can be fantasized as only inflicted on victims in exotic locations elsewhere, not on our own shores.

Yours sincerely

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