

From: Roger FitzGerald [REDACTED]
Sent: Monday, 8 June 2020 3:26 PM
To: Committee, Public Works (REPS) <pwc@aph.gov.au>
Subject: Submission to PWC re AWM proposed development works

Committee Secretary
Parliamentary Standing Committee on Public Works
Parliament House
Canberra ACT 2600

Dear Committee Secretary

I refer to the Public Works Committee Inquiry into the War Memorial development proposal. I would like to express my concern at an apparently misguided approach to development of the Australian War Memorial building and site in Campbell.

The main War Memorial building is of huge significance to the families of Australians who have fought and died in war. It is a symbol of national heritage significance in standing out from the air as a cruciform monument at the head of ANZAC Parade. Seen from the air the broader precinct is obviously designed as forming a huge iconic grave at the foothills of Mt Ainslie in the heart of our national capital. This is symbolic of Australian war graves in Europe and other places.

I am hugely impressed about the way the Memorial staff are committed to the Memorial and the professional way they go about all their business. Their work in collecting, research, hosting ceremonial events etc demonstrates deep respect for the memory of those who have fought and died in war.

However, I have been extremely concerned at the way the AWM site developments have been directed, governed and undertaken over the last 20 years. Locating a large administrative block alongside, tacking ANZAC Hall onto the Memorial, unnecessarily mounting huge objects around the building, and now knocking down trees for development carparking and completely filling in the site. These developments all unwittingly diminish and potentially destroy this iconic national significance of the cruciform symbol of Memorial building within the ANZAC precinct. Whilst possibly well intentioned, the developments are counter-productive.

To remember the souls of the dead, there are some things we need to keep and conserve - not just in the collection, but in respect of the Memorial building itself. The current proposed developments are not helping the national significance of the Memorial. More is not better.

Other than apathy, there is no good reason why the collections and administrative work cannot be serviced from other land nearby. This would allow the collection to be exhibited in a way that is integral but not destructive of the Memorial. As I have proposed to the NCA over the years it could be done in a way which also assists public understanding and commemoration also of the larger ANZAC precinct. This would happen if the administration, research, collections development and storage were to be housed at the foot of ANZAC Parade along Constitution Avenue. It does not all have to be crammed onto the site at the head of ANZAC Parade.

The AWM have consistently not addressed my concerns that they are desecrating the iconic nature of the Memorial and despoiling the broader significance in the way they are developing the site. Contrary

to the AWM claim of openness to public consultation, I have not received any reply or acknowledge to my attached correspondence to the AWM.

Also over the last few decades the National Capital Authority has constantly not pro-actively done its job in respect of the broader precinct (including when I wrote to them prior the erection of ANZAC Hall). Instead it seems that over the years they have allowed Commonwealth land at the foot of ANZAC Parade to be sold off for commercial and residential developers. I also include my most recent correspondence on the matter with NCA.

Under its enabling Act of the Parliament, the PWC shall have regard to the “public value of the work” it looks at. We need the Public Works Committee to see the bigger context of the Memorial building and bring these authorities to public account for the apparent sacrilege that is unwittingly being practised at the head of ANZAC Parade.

I would suggest that this a matter that is plain for the public to see, though only from the air at the right time of day and angle. Though I have also written to the Australian Heritage Council, my view does not rely on documentation of the detailed heritage significance of the building ‘in the round’ etc

Thank you for the Committee doing its job in looking at this matter of public significance. Perhaps the Committee could do a fly over at the right time of day to provide us all a line of last resort for retaining the public value of the site without all the clutter.

Yours sincerely

Roger FitzGerald

