

INQUIRY INTO THE PROPOSED EXTENSIONS TO THE AUSTRALIAN WAR MEMORIAL

28 May 2020.

To the Committee Secretary
Parliamentary Standing Committee on Public Works
Australian Parliament House, Canberra.

I wish to express my very serious concerns about the above-mentioned proposal:

- Firstly, that it is being considered by your committee before the DAWE report on its heritage aspects has been concluded – which surely is not following due government process.
- Secondly, that there is no justification for expanding the current building. It serves the commemoration purpose for which it was designed and largely, but not entirely, gets its prime message over. The thought of adding what would amount to a glorified ‘junk shed’ is appalling.
- The cost of the proposal is enormous and completely unjustified given that other significant national institutions are being defunded (not to mention taking into account the cost of the impact of Covid 19); that Foreign aid, which can help prevent and reduce the impact of war, is also being cut and that services to veterans are inadequate to meet their needs. Also, the War Memorial in no way warrants special status above those other pressing needs – Australia’s cultural heritage is far more nuanced than performance in wars. And in regard to cost recovery a commemorative shrine should never be treated as a ‘cash cow’, like a ‘Disney Land’ set-up.
- If any special project was considered worthy of funding it should be about educating kids about the prevention of conflicts, not the further glorification of militarism.

Finally, I am also concerned that public opposition to this proposed expansion of what appears to be yet another glorified symbol of man’s inhumanity to mankind has been ignored. As an Australian citizen whose parents both served in the Middle East (and my father elsewhere) in WW11, a tax payer and someone who has served with the UN for over a decade, I have every right to express my opinion on the subject - and to be heard and to have my views respected and taken into account.

Otherwise we might easily construe that Australia has evolved into a non-democratic country which is being led by the nose by self-promoting, profit minded armaments manufacturers who so conveniently ignore the human cost of armed conflict, rather than by elected officials.

Yours, very sincerely,

Margaret O’Callaghan.

