



27 May 2020

Committee Secretary
Parliamentary Standing Committee on Public Works
pwc@aph.gov.au

Re Australian War Memorial Development Project

I would be grateful if you would submit the attached comments on this ill-founded proposal to the Standing Committee.

Yours sincerely

Linda Young
Dr Linda Young

Re Australian War Memorial Development Project

I must add my voice to the thunder of good sense rolling from the War Memorial Heritage Guardians. I know the AWM well from the point of view of a historian who taught museum studies for 25 years, with the view that the AWM used to practise exemplary standards in heritage, museum, visitor and commemorations management. The development that relies on demolishing Anzac Hall is excessive and unnecessary. Far from being a worthy project, and I urge the Parliamentary Standing Committee on public Works to decline to approve it.

My objections stand on the following grounds:

Apparent vision of infinite expansion: The planned redevelopment suggests that the AWM will and must expand endlessly. It is unrealistic to plan that every decade of events should be added in ever-larger buildings that impose on the significance of the existing site. Playing the Anzac card of military patriotism to justify expansion is an expensive fraud.

Alleged utility as a therapeutic milieu by veterans: Medical and psychological experts advise that the millions which the proposed AWM redevelopment will cost would be better applied to direct veteran assistance. In the museum world, it is evident that stressed veterans can and do find active solace in the multitude of small military and community museums as volunteers working with their peers, demonstrated by the National Vietnam Veterans Museum in Phillip Island.

Wasteful demolition of the Anzac Hall building: Personally, I described Anzac Hall when it was built as 'the most elegant shed in Australia', meant as a wry comment on the way its design met the brief with superb style as well as practical functionality. As a shed, it's an immensely flexible space; as a piece of civic building within a heritage landscape, it's a sensitively devised addition to the whole. I think it is an absurd waste of money and embodied energy to destroy this less-than-ten-year-old structure in order to enlarge the existing AWM.