

Secretary  
Joint Standing Committee on the National Capital and External Territories  
House of Representatives  
PO Box 6021  
Parliament House  
Canberra ACT 2600

Dear Sir/Madam

### **Inquiry into the administration of the National Memorials Ordinance 1928**

I would like to make a submission in regard to the above Inquiry. I have no expertise in any field relevant to planning or memorials but I am a descendant of Australian service men and women who fought, and died, in World War I and have been a resident of Canberra for thirty eight years. I have followed the debate in *The Canberra Times* in regard to the proposed World War Memorials at Rond Terrace with some horror and am relieved that the Minister for Regional Australia, Regional Development and Local Government has seen fit to initiate this Inquiry.

#### **The Committee**

I am sure that the National Memorials Ordinance was introduced in 1928 with the best of intentions but find it extraordinary that in 2011 we are relying on an 84 year old Ordinance to govern significant planning decisions in the National Capital.

According to the Ordinance, the membership of the Canberra National Memorials Committee (CNMC) is a roll call of senior politicians, including the Prime Minister and the Leader of the Opposition, none of whom, by mere virtue of their political position, are endowed with any planning or design expertise. Nor do most of them live in Canberra any longer than they are required by Parliamentary sessions. Do these politicians really turn up to deliberate on the design and construction of memorials in Canberra? There is not enough transparency in the process to know if this is the case or whether these important decisions are deputed, without an clear provision in the Ordinance for this to happen.

I note that the National Capital Authority website advises that the two positions allocated to residents of Canberra are not filled. What does the fact that these positions have apparently NEVER been filled say about the National Capital Authority's attitude towards the citizens of Canberra? It is outrageous that decisions that the citizens of Canberra have to live with have been made without any local input. In addition there is no provision in the Ordinance to ensure that these citizens of Canberra are qualified in any way to contribute to the decision making process.

- ⤴ **I suggest that there be a review of the membership of this Committee to ensure that when a proposal is presented to it there is sufficient expertise to ensure that the final recommendation is based on good planning and design advice as well as the appropriateness of the proposed memorial being placed on National Land.**
- ⤴ **There should be some identified relevant criteria, other than being a politician, for appointment to this Committee.**
- ⤴ **The positions allocated to citizens of Canberra should be retained and filled.**

## **The Process**

Section 7 of the Ordinance appears to rely on the interest and enthusiasm of the Committee and/or the Minister to ensure that there is any expert scrutiny of proposals put to them. The Ordinance requires no reference to any planning legislation applicable in Canberra, requires no criteria to be met, requires no proof of any support for the proposed memorial in any part of the Australian community. If these guidelines do exist somewhere in the relevant department they are not available to the public. Such a complete lack of transparency in the decision making process is unacceptable in the twenty-first century.

Nowhere does the Ordinance require the Committee to be given or to seek expert opinion relevant to the decision at hand.

- ⤴ **The Ordinance should contain criteria or goals that have to be met by memorial proposals before they are considered by the Committee.**
- ⤴ **There should be a specific requirement for at least two, preferably three, expert opinions on the historic and aesthetic merits of any memorial proposal.**

I notice that the Ordinance makes no provision for public comment during the decision making process. The best the hapless citizen can do is object AFTER the Committee has made a determination. This makes no allowance for even the possibility of improving or amending a memorial proposal let alone objecting to its design, purpose or placement until the Committee has reached its conclusion.

- ⤴ **There should be a requirement for all memorial proposals to be listed on the NCA website.**
- ⤴ **The Ordinance should specifically provide for a public consultation process prior to any determination by the Committee.**

## **The Rond Terrace World War Memorials**

The fact that the erection of these memorials is even being discussed is a clear reflection of the failure of the present Ordinance. What qualified body decided that we needed these monuments to war? What planning expert decided we needed them on the shore

of Lake Burley Griffin? Where is the lucid argument that explains them in the context of the existing War Memorial?

I have always subscribed to the argument that the Anzac legend is about honouring those who surrendered their lives or their health in the belief that they were doing the right thing by their country. Bean's concept of the National War memorial was to remember and explain the wars in which Australian's fought, not glorify them. The War Memorial and the individual memorials on Anzac Parade are on a human scale that reflects this philosophy. The Rond Terrace monoliths are something else again – grand, ugly monuments to war – too large to be a memorial to any individual soul lost. My great uncle Vincent Stubbs was a 5'3” piano maker from Sydney who enlisted after the grim news from Gallipoli had filtered home. My great uncle Tom Lang was shearing in Queensland when he enlisted in 1916. My great aunt Lydia Lawrence nursed service men in India as part of the first Australian nursing corps. The Rond Terrace monuments will do nothing to represent their lives or their sacrifice. In fact, they say more about the about the people proposing them than they are about such ordinary Australians. Just because a consortium is prepared to throw money at a public project does not make it right or acceptable to the rest of the community.

- ▲ **The Rond Terrace Memorials proposal should be subject to public comment.**
- ▲ **NCA should seek input from a range of planners and designers to inform the next step in regard to these monuments.**

Thank You

Christine Lawrence