

Australian War Memorial Eastern Precinct Development and National Service Memorial, Canberra, ACT

- 5.1 The Australian War Memorial Eastern Precinct Development and National Service Memorial, Canberra, ACT proposes to upgrade the Eastern Precinct and improve visitor safety, access and amenities. The new Memorial Courtyard will also provide a site for the National Service Memorial. The estimated cost of the project is \$19.54 million (including GST).
- 5.2 The proposal was referred to the Committee on 4 September 2008.

Conduct of the inquiry

- 5.3 The inquiry was advertised in local and national newspapers and submissions sought from those with a direct interest in the project. The Committee received four submissions, one supplementary submission and one confidential supplementary submission regarding the project costs. A list of submissions can be found at Appendix A.
- 5.4 The Committee undertook a site inspection, in-camera hearing and public hearing on 13 October 2008 in Canberra. A list of witnesses can be found at Appendix B.
- 5.5 The transcript of the public hearing as well as the submissions to the inquiry is available on the Committee's website¹. Plans for the

1 <www.aph.gov.au/pwc>

proposed works are detailed in Submission 1, Australian War Memorial (AWM).

Need for works

- 5.6 The AWM states that the current amenity and condition of the Eastern Precinct is not in keeping with the high quality of the rest of the War Memorial site:
- the current location of the coach parking adjacent to the main memorial building detracts from the significance of the precinct and architectural and landscape integrity of the site;
 - the café location is a pre-eminent position on the site and the design and elevated placement of the existing café does not meet visitor needs well or enhance the architectural integrity of the developed site; and
 - the existing temporary car park is an unsatisfactory facility not in keeping with the Site Development Plan and has degraded the landscape.²
- 5.7 The development of the Eastern Precinct is required to improve visitor safety, access and facilities in the Precinct, particularly for school children and coach groups. External facilities do not meet current codes for elderly and mobility impaired visitors due to steep inclines to the existing café.³
- 5.8 Capacity for car parking at the Memorial site has been an issue for many years and overflow parking during peak operation currently reaches into the suburb of Campbell, which has drawn complaints from residents. Additionally, there is no all-weather parking available on the site.⁴
- 5.9 Development of the Eastern Precinct will provide amenity to the forecourt or the Memorial and restore the vistas to the Parliamentary Triangle. The current arrangements of a temporary dirt car park and hazardous bus set-down arrangements are inappropriate for a national institution of this importance. Therefore the Committee finds there is need for the proposed works.

2 Submission 1, Australian War Memorial (AWM), p. 3.

3 Submission 1, AWM, p. 3.

4 Submission 1, AWM, p. 3.

Scope of works

5.10 The proposed scope of works is detailed in Submission 1, Australian War Memorial.⁵ The works propose to construct an underground public car park, dedicated bus parking and a new café. In short, the works propose the following:

- Structural elements of reinforced and pre-stressed concrete to form the underground car park with the car park roof forming the base of the Memorial Courtyard, coach drop off area, café and forecourts.
- Civil works including modifications to existing roads, surface coach parking, an access road to the café service area and conversion of part of an existing open drain to an underground pipe drain to enable the coach parking to be constructed above the drain.
- Landscaping including re-establishment of grassed areas and trees, paving, crushed aggregate surfaces and some other plantings.
- Building works including the café comprising pre-cast concrete structural elements, glass facades and a metal roof surrounded on all sides by prominent concrete band beams. A separate waste enclosure is also proposed.
- Mechanical, electrical and hydraulic services to support the facilities including lighting, electronic security, power supplies, gas supplies, fire services, drainage including rain water collection, cooling, heating, ventilation, water supplies, sewerage and trade waste for the café.⁶

5.11 The Committee has assessed the scope of works and finds them suitable to provide the facilities necessary to meet the needs of the proposal.

Cost of works

5.12 The total out-turn cost of this work is estimated to be \$19.54 million (including GST) which includes escalation costs, contingencies, and all professional fees and disbursements.⁷

5 The submission is available on the Committee's website or by contacting the Committee Secretariat.

6 Submission 1, AWM, p. 11.

7 Submission 1, AWM, p. 20.

- 5.13 The Committee received detailed cost plans for the project and held an in-camera hearing with the Australian War Memorial on the full project costs.
- 5.14 The Committee is satisfied that the costings for the project provided to it are adequate.

Project delivery

- 5.15 Construction is expected to commence after Anzac Day 2009 and be completed before Anzac Day 2010 to avoid disruption to the Memorial's busiest period.⁸ The AWM sought, and received, the Committee's approval for concurrent documentation to ensure the planned project timelines would be achieved.

Project issues

Car parking

- 5.16 The existing dirt car park located at the front of the Memorial detracts from the aesthetic value of the War Memorial building and from the Parliament House Vista. In addition, overflow parking from the Memorial has been an issue for local residents for some time.
- 5.17 The new underground car park will provide 140 extra spaces, an increase of 35 per cent.⁹ This will effectively meet the estimated increased visitor numbers over the next three years and the 'Site Development Plan has identified potential for future additional car parking'.¹⁰
- 5.18 The ACT Government acknowledged that 'the new underground car park will certainly improve the access for both cars and tourist coaches' but sought assurances that there would be 'minimal impact on surrounding road networks and residential areas during the construction period.'¹¹
- 5.19 The AWM is aware of the concerns of local residents and has been conducting a consultation program to inform residents of the proposal. Its submission states:

8 Mr Haralambous, AWM, Proof Transcript of Evidence, 13 October 2008, p. 7.

9 Mr Johnson, AWM, Proof Transcript of Evidence, 13 October 2008, p. 9.

10 Submission 1, AWM, p. 5.

11 Submission 4, ACT Government.

While some additional on-street coach parking will be required for about four months during construction, the completed project will reduce the overall impact of the Memorial's operations on the community by providing expanded and improved parking on the site. Options to route construction traffic (including dump trucks carrying spoil from the excavation) away from the main memorial building and surrounding residential streets and to retain temporary visitor and construction worker parking on the site during the construction period are being considered. This will reduce impacts on surrounding streets during the construction period.¹²

- 5.20 The new coach parking site will accommodate eight coaches off Treloar Crescent and away from the eastern precinct, reducing the need for parking in neighbouring suburban streets.¹³ The improved design for bus access will also increase public safety by improving access arrangements:

At present there is disabled parking there [the eastern precinct] and there are coaches arriving and disgorging young school children and picking up people – it is quite a dangerous area that requires a lot of supervision.¹⁴

- 5.21 Over 100 new eucalypt trees will be planted in the location of the current dirt car park ensuring low maintenance and low water consumption and providing a picnic area for visitors.¹⁵

Heritage value

- 5.22 Some concerns were expressed that the design of the new café was not congruous with the existing architecture of the site. The architect assured the Committee that there are a 'number of successful contemporary expressions of architecture already around the site that sit harmoniously with the traditional.'¹⁶ He further explained:

12 Submission 1, AWM, p. 20.

13 Major Gen Gower, AWM, Proof Transcript of Evidence, 13 October 2008, p. 3; Supplementary Submission, AWM, p. 1.

14 Major Gen Gower, AWM, Proof Transcript of Evidence, 13 October 2008, p. 2.

15 Submission 1, AWM, p. 6; Mr Johnson, AWM, Proof Transcript of Evidence, 13 October 2008, p. 4.

16 Mr Johnson, AWM, Proof Transcript of Evidence, 13 October 2008, p. 8.

I see the café as part of that ensemble of new architecture, but it is modest in expression, simple in its design and almost classical in its proportioning, and it has a simple range of materials that relate in tone back to the main building.¹⁷

- 5.23 At the site inspection the Committee noted that the current café was poorly sited and not in keeping with the building design. The AWM acknowledges that existing facilities are 'difficult to access for mobility impaired and some older visitors due to steep inclines to the existing café.'¹⁸ The Committee notes that the new design will improve the appearance and amenity of the area.

National Service Memorial

- 5.24 The works include the siting for the National Service Memorial. Only the base site works are included in the project costs, the memorial itself will be funded by the National Servicemen's Association.
- 5.25 The National Servicemen's Association of Australia represents the 290 000 men who were called up and served with the Navy, Army and Air Force between 1951 and 1972.¹⁹ The Association has raised sufficient funds to establish the National Service Memorial with donations coming from 'the federal government, state governments, councils, RSLs, public industry and national servicemen and their families.'²⁰
- 5.26 The Memorial is designed as a contemplative area which will reflect the three services:
- The square sandstone base, matching the material of the Australian War Memorial itself, will represent the Army; the reflection of the sky in the polished black granite slab will represent the Air Force and the water in the large bronze bowl will represent the Navy.²¹
- 5.27 The Committee heard that the National Servicemen's Association consulted widely on the concept and design of the Memorial and received unanimous support.²² The National President of the

17 Mr Johnson, AWM, Proof Transcript of Evidence, 13 October 2008, p. 8.

18 Submission 1, AWM, p. 3.

19 Submission 2, National Servicemen's Association of Australia (NSAA), p. 1.

20 Mr Jennings, NSAA, Proof Transcript of Evidence, 13 October 2008, p. 10.

21 Submission 2, NSAA, p. 1.

22 Mr Jennings, NSAA, Proof Transcript of Evidence, 13 October 2008, p. 11.

Association stressed that 'the association is building the National Service Memorial on behalf of all national servicemen, not just the association.'²³

- 5.28 The Committee congratulate the NSAA for raising the funds to build the Memorial on behalf of the 290,000 servicemen and their families.

Committee comment

- 5.29 Overall, the Committee is satisfied that this project has merit in terms of need, scope and cost.
- 5.30 The Committee is confident that the heritage value of the Australian War Memorial will be maintained, and enhanced by these works.
- 5.31 Having examined the purpose, need, use, revenue and public value of the work, the Committee considers that it is expedient that the proposed works proceed.

Recommendation 5

The Committee recommends that the House of Representatives resolve, pursuant to Section 18 (7) of the *Public Works Committee Act 1969*, that it is expedient to carry out the following proposed work: Australian War Memorial Eastern Precinct Development and National Service Memorial, Canberra.

Mark Butler MP
Chair
27 November 2008

23 Mr Jennings, NSAA, Proof Transcript of Evidence, 13 October 2008, p. 11.

