

Introduction

Referral of Work

- 1.1 On 1 December 2005 the proposal to redevelop the post-1945 galleries and discovery room for the Australian War Memorial(AWM) was referred to the Public Works Committee for consideration and report in accordance with the provisions of the *Public Works Committee Act 1969* (the Act).¹ The proponent agency for this work is the Australian War Memorial (AWM).
- 1.2 The Hon Dr Sharman Stone MP, Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for Finance and Administration, advised the House that the estimated cost of the project was \$17.8 million. Subject to parliamentary approval, the proposed works were planned to commence in July 2006 and be completed by October 2007.

¹ Extract from the *Votes and Proceedings of the House of Representatives*, No. 61, Wednesday 12 October 2005

Background

The Site

- 1.3 The proposed works will be constructed within the AWM's main building and will include a glazed link to an exhibition of the bridge of HMAS *Brisbane*.²

Options Considered

- 1.4 One option was for deferral of the work; however, the AWM was aware of constant criticism from veterans and their families over some years. They argued that deferral would alienate stakeholders and exacerbate criticism of the inadequacies of these galleries. The redevelopment was in line with the Gallery Masterplan, formulated to provide a series of staged developments as funding became available.³
- 1.5 A more limited redevelopment of the Discovery Room was considered, but the space was considered too confined to offer school students interactive experiences that would meet curriculum needs.⁴

Inquiry Process

- 1.6 The Committee is required by the Act to consider public works over \$6 million⁵ and report to Parliament on:
- the purpose of the work and its suitability for that purpose;
 - the need for, or the advisability of, carrying out the work;
 - whether the money to be expended on the work is being spent in the most cost effective manner;
 - the amount of revenue the work will generate for the Commonwealth, if that is its purpose; and
 - the present and prospective public value of the work.⁶

2 Appendix C, Submission No. 1, Australian War Memorial, paragraph 7

3 *ibid*, paragraph 13

4 *ibid*, paragraph 14

5 *Public Works Committee Act 1969*, Part III, Section 18 (8)

6 *ibid*, Section 17

- 1.7 The Committee called for submissions by advertising the inquiry in the *Canberra Times* on Saturday, 14 January 2006. The Committee also sought submissions from relevant government agencies, local government, private organisations and individuals, who may be materially affected by or have an interest in the proposed work. The Committee subsequently placed submissions and other information relating to the inquiry on its web site in order to encourage further public participation.

Inspection and Public Hearing

- 1.8 On Friday, 10 February 2006, the Committee visited the Australian War Memorial to inspect at first hand the scope and environs of the proposed works. This was followed by an in-camera briefing on confidential costs, after which a public hearing was held in Parliament House, Canberra.⁷

⁷ See Appendix D for the official Hansard transcript of the evidence taken by the Committee at the public hearing on Friday, 10 February 2006 in Parliament House, Canberra