



COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA

Official Committee Hansard

JOINT COMMITTEE ON PUBLIC WORKS

**Reference: Redevelopment of Post-1945 Conflicts Gallery and Discovery Room for
the Australian War Memorial, Canberra, Australian Capital Territory**

FRIDAY, 10 FEBRUARY 2006

CANBERRA

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**JOINT STATUTORY COMMITTEE ON
PUBLIC WORKS**

Friday, 10 February 2006

Members: Mrs Moylan (*Chair*), Mr Brendan O'Connor (*Deputy Chair*), Senators Forshaw, Parry and Troeth and Mr Forrest, Mr Jenkins, Mr Ripoll and Mr Wakelin

Members in attendance: Senators Forshaw, Parry and Troeth and Mrs Moylan

Terms of reference for the inquiry:

To inquire into and report on:

Redevelopment of Post-1945 Conflicts Gallery and Discovery Room for the Australian War Memorial, Canberra, Australian Capital Territory.

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Committee met at 12.53 pm

CHAIR (Mrs Moylan)—It gives me much pleasure to declare open this public hearing into the proposed redevelopment of the post-1945 conflicts galleries and discovery room for the Australian War Memorial, Canberra. This project was referred to the Public Works Committee on 1 December 2005 for consideration and report to parliament. In accordance with subsection 17(3) of the Public Works Committee Act 1969:

- (3) In considering and reporting on a public work, the Committee shall have regard to -
 - (a) the stated purpose of the work and its suitability for that purpose;
 - (b) the necessity for, or the advisability of, carrying out the work;
 - (c) the most effective use that can be made, in the carrying out of the work, of the moneys to be expended on the work;
 - (d) where the work purports to be of a revenue-producing character, the amount of revenue that it may reasonably be expected to produce; and
 - (e) the present and prospective public value of the work.

We appreciated the briefing that we had early this morning and the opportunity to inspect the Australian War Memorial and the site of the galleries and the proposed works. We will now hear evidence from the Australian War Memorial, the Returned and Services League of Australia and the National Capital Authority.

[12.54 pm]

GOWER, Major General Stephen Newman (Retired), Director and Chief Executive Officer, Australian War Memorial

NORTHEY, Ms Vicki Anne, Head, Gallery Development, Australian War Memorial

ROOT, Mr Peter Kenneth, Project Consultant, Australian War Memorial

DENTON, Mr John, Director, Denton Corker Marshall Pty Ltd

DE JAGER, Mr Mark Henry, Director, WT Partnership

Witnesses were then sworn or affirmed—

CHAIR—On behalf of the committee, I welcome you all here today to this hearing. Do you have any comments to make on the capacity in which you appear today?

Mr Root—I am the Managing Director of Root Projects Australia.

Mr De Jager—My company does quantity surveying and cost management services.

Mr Denton—My company are the architects for the project.

CHAIR—The committee has received a statement of evidence and a supplementary submission from the Australian War Memorial. These will be made available in a volume of submissions for the inquiry and they are also available on the committee's website. Does the War Memorial wish to propose amendments to the submission that is made before the committee today?

Major Gen. Gower—I have no amendments.

CHAIR—Major General Gower, would you like to start with an opening statement and then we will go to questions.

Major Gen. Gower—On behalf of my senior management colleagues at this table, we are delighted to have the opportunity to brief your committee on this proposal. Perhaps I could say how pleased we were to host you this morning on your site visit. I trust that gave you some insight into what our proposal is about.

CHAIR—It did indeed.

Major Gen. Gower—I thank you for coming. This proposal is the next stage in the revitalisation and redevelopment of the Australian War Memorial. In a very real sense, it is the follow-on to the building, which you glimpsed this morning and which this committee approved in 2004—that is, the East Building. It is in the East Building that we are housing displaced staff

and collection items so that we can get 1,700 square metres of exhibition space on the lower ground floor of the main memorial building.

This redevelopment is proceeding in accordance with a master plan that was approved by the council of the Australian War Memorial—which has the authority under the act for such planning—that was done in the mid-1990s. To date, we have redeveloped about 60 per cent of the galleries of the Australian War Memorial, particularly the Second World War galleries on the ground floor and the Aircraft Hall. On the lower ground floor we have revitalised our Research Centre, particularly emphasising the online facility. We provided an area for special exhibitions—that is, travelling exhibitions—which has been tremendously successful, and we have enhanced the breakout space to our Telstra theatre, which we use quite a lot and also hire out.

Also we built, with a Centenary of Federation grant from the federal government, Anzac Hall, which is a marvellous 3,000-square metre ‘black box’ exhibition space. In there we pioneered, certainly in Australia—and I will put my neck out and say in the world—the technique called object theatre, whereby, with large objects, the story about that relic is told using dramatic sound, light and images. I understand that all the committee members have seen at least one of the displays in Anzac Hall. Of course, as I mentioned this morning on your tour, the East Building is weeks off completion.

We are seeking your approval today for the building works associated with this planned rejuvenation of the post-45 galleries. The requirement for this is long overdue. Post-45 conflicts start in 1947, when we had a small group go to Indonesia—the Good Offices Commission—and also to Kashmir. So there is a long story to be told. The stories of over 110,000 Australian service men and women will be told in these galleries. As you saw this morning, what we have is inadequate and very small. We really want to tell their stories and show some respect for the service and sacrifices which have been made over the years.

Our surveys indicate that 43 per cent of our visitors have some affiliation with the 110,000 who have served. So of the 850,000 who come every year to the Australian War Memorial, we are really providing something which is satisfying their needs, and I think that is very important.

Over the years we have had a strong stream of criticism by veterans, particularly Korean veterans and peacekeepers, that we really are not telling their story properly. All I have been able to do, on behalf of council, is to write back saying that I agree and that we are doing our best to put in place some plans whereby we can do justice to their stories. I think that is the underlying requirement for this very exciting project that you are considering.

We believe that, with the plans which I outlined to you this morning, we can produce some really outstanding galleries—very innovative ones which use the latest museum technology and the latest applications of multimedia. As we also alluded to this morning, we are consulting widely with our many stakeholders. Of course, consulting with stakeholders does not mean that you can satisfy all of them, but we think it is very important to get out and talk to them, find out what their aspirations are, what they think the important parts of their service were, what the big events were and what the great stories are. We have started that and we are still doing that, and it is a very important part of developing galleries.

In addition, we are developing a facility for a most important group of Australians—that is young Australians. We host 110,000 visits by young Australians every year, and that figure is growing. I want to see it grow, because we tell their heritage, their story of Australia. We want to communicate that to them, uplift them and make them feel proud of it and make them think about it. We are doing a Discovery Room, which is designed specifically for children, which is related as much as we can to state educational curriculums. It will have a helicopter in there, which they can get into; part of a submarine; the back end of a truck; a trench; and some area where we can do work on peacekeeping—they can be exposed to some of the problems facing our men and women who are peacekeeping, such as all the ambiguities and so forth.

I believe we have a mature, proven team to discharge this proposal. I think our record in recent years speaks for itself, but we do have a very good project manager. Vicki Northey has been with us for many years and she has been honoured for her work at the Australian War Memorial. We have John Denton from Denton Corker Marshall, one of Australia's outstanding architectural firms with considerable international stature. Denton Corker Marshall designed the administration building. They designed—and I think it is an outstanding design—Anzac Hall; and, in fact, it won the Sir Zelman Cowan Award for the best public building in Australia. John's partnership designed it, as they did the East Building. So they are a group that we have great confidence in. They are certainly more than equal to the task.

Peter Root, the principal from Root Projects Australia, has been with us as the project management consultant for eight years. He is unparalleled I think with his experience in cultural institutions in Australia—he has a second-to-none record. Of course, the quality surveying is most important—you have to have some confidence in the cost estimates. We have worked with WT Partnership right from the start many years ago and they are an integral part of the team. Vicki also has a very good internal team. They are very good subject matter experts—historians and so on. In addition, we have good relics to put on display. So I am very confident that we have the team to deliver this project to the standards that you would expect on your committee and that the Australian people would expect—on time and within the budget which we can garner together ultimately for this project. We are only alluding to sponsorship in that last little bit!

The plans we have for this building respect the heritage status of this great War Memorial building. You heard this morning that some walls and pillars need to be removed, but we do not see that as a problem. We expect to have some interesting latent conditions, but we will deal with those as we have previously in modifying the building. We need to lower the floors in some areas—we have briefed you this morning on that—and upgrade all the building services, which is long overdue. Overall, I believe we have the available funding. We have a very good schedule which I believe we can meet so that, by the end of next year, the Australian people, and particularly those 110,000 veterans, can see really outstanding galleries that recognise their service in a very fitting way. That is all I wish to say by way of opening remarks.

CHAIR—Thank you very much, Major General Gower. The War Memorial is indeed an iconic place. It is a source of great pride for all the Australians who visit it and for those who have not had that pleasure but who have seen it referred to and illustrated. I think all of the committee would join me in saying what a great job you and your team do in making sure that, given that a living memorial needs upgrading, it is always done to a very high standard. That has certainly been our experience to date.

Major Gen. Gower—I do appreciate those remarks on behalf of your committee very much. I am sure that the members of my management team and staff appreciate them. Thank you.

CHAIR—I think you are governed by a board of management as well?

Major Gen. Gower—Yes, a council.

CHAIR—Obviously it is a very active board, and you are making decisions to make sure that the gallery maintains its relevance. I think it is great, especially for the many schoolchildren who visit it each year. That brings me to the point of the National Capital Authority's role, because clearly they have a great interest. I could not help but reflect, as we drove away from the memorial this morning, on what wonderful vistas there are. This does not just happen by chance. The look of Canberra and its iconic buildings, and particularly a place such as the War Memorial, needs to be considered in the whole scope of other buildings and the natural environment. So the National Capital Authority clearly has a very important role to play here.

So, for the public record, would you outline the consultations that have taken place. I notice that the National Capital Authority are saying that they are supportive in principle, but they have not yet seen the detail. Perhaps you would like to outline for the public record what you are doing to make sure that there is ongoing consultation and that you will meet the requirements of the National Capital Authority.

Major Gen. Gower—I agree that we must consult with the National Capital Authority, and I acknowledge their primacy in these planning matters. Over the years, we have had a very good relationship with the officers in the National Capital Authority. We have consulted with them in all the projects, and the outcomes have been more than satisfactory, as you have seen in the results on the ground. The Department of the Environment and Heritage is another group that we must talk with. With your permission, to give you a summary of the current position, I will ask Ms Northey to give you more detail.

Ms Northey—We have been having ongoing discussions with the National Capital Authority and the Department of the Environment and Heritage over probably the last four years regarding the whole project. Very early in the piece, we put on the table to them that we would need to make changes to the inside of the building, in particular for these new galleries. We briefed them at that stage on the scope of what that work would be, and we have had discussions with them, guided by our heritage master plan, which sets out particularly sensitive areas of the building and how we would treat them.

With the NCA and their planning processes, what we try to do—and have done in the past, very successfully—is to work through all of the design issues prior to putting the final documentation to them for works approval. We provide samples and all of the information that they require, so that our submissions are quite substantial but also there are no shocks in there for the NCA because they have worked through the design process with us.

That is where we are up to at this stage—finalising the design process with Denton Corker Marshall on exactly what, for example, the finishes would be on the collection access door. We will go into more detail on the *Brisbane* bridge and provide samples of what the material will be. Over the next few months there will be a very intensive period with them again and then we will

put in our works approval documentation, which includes the final documents that we have to put forward to the builder. It all dovetails together quite neatly, but we have a commitment to the National Capital Authority, and they have been very forthcoming in assisting us throughout all of our projects on the best way of approaching them and also in setting guidelines that we have worked through together so that you cannot see things like the *Brisbane* bridge or Anzac Hall from the front of the building. All of those guidelines are put in place before the design process even begins.

CHAIR—I have just one other question in relation to the National Capital Authority processes. Do you expect that there will be any delays with the National Capital Authority discussions and approvals once we get through the Public Works Committee hearings and it is referred to parliament?

Ms Northey—Not at this time. We always have sufficient time built in to our program to ensure that there is sufficient time to go through any design issues that they may have and also to provide the right samples that they are looking for and have those discussions prior to the documentation being completed. It also allows them to run through their own internal process of talking to a number of areas within their own organisation, like the landscape people who maintain the exterior of the building, for example. So there is sufficient time to do that, yes.

Senator FORSHAW—I echo the comments of the chair and thank you for the opportunity to visit this morning. I want to follow up on the heritage issue. I note from your submission that you have engaged Peter Freeman Pty Ltd, Conservation Architects and Planners to provide independent advice on all heritage issues. Could you explain that firm's role in the context of what you have told us about your discussions and the role of the NCA and the Department of the Environment and Heritage?

Major Gen. Gower—I see it as very important to have a consultant like that when you are formulating your views, because clearly it is not really worth embarking on something which is going to hit the shoals of environmental heritage considerations later on. So we have used them for many years as a consultant.

Senator FORSHAW—You have used them for some time?

Major Gen. Gower—That is to assist our thought processes. He in no way affects the considerations by other authorities such as DEH or NCA. It is to help us reach a position where we are likely to have a proposal that will be approved by the appropriate authorities.

Senator FORSHAW—I assumed it was something like that but it was the wording you used of 'independent advice' that suggested there was some specific role or requirement that was necessary for you to hire that firm.

Major Gen. Gower—We would not wish to receive something that obviously transgressed heritage considerations.

Senator FORSHAW—I appreciate that. But as far as Mr Denton's firm doing the design and all the architectural plans and that, I am trying to understand the role of any other architects, if you like, that are engaged by the War Memorial.

Mr Denton—They bring to the process specialised experience, particularly of heritage and heritage architecture, and what the current status of how you adaptively reuse heritage buildings and what are reasonable things to do and to not do in that sort of heritage environment, which is an area that we are not expert in but to which they can bring extra support.

Senator FORSHAW—That goes to the building and structural works, but does it also go to the layout of the siting of the particular exhibits? Or is that something that the memorial—

Major Gen. Gower—The walls and structure inside, but the exhibits are driven by the design aesthetic and what message you want to convey to people.

Senator FORSHAW—Does your firm do that?

Mr Denton—No, there is another layer, which is the exhibition designers, who deal with the exhibition design. But the heritage architects do get involved right down to discussion of detail: how to cut the opening; how to detail the stonework when you have cut it; how to ensure that, if it is ever put back, you can put the stone back in the same way—the very detailed heritage considerations.

Senator FORSHAW—Thank you. I appreciate that because I have not had the experience of other committee members—I think the chair has been involved—in earlier considerations of the work there. I do not have any other specific questions that have not already been asked. I was very impressed with the briefing this morning and with the submission.

Senator TROETH—Further to the heritage considerations, I notice in the National Capital Authority submission that they talk about a possible stay of 10 years for HMAS *Brisbane* in that position. I think they describe it as a temporary stay. Could you give us an idea of the outlook on that—is that a minimum stay? What are the considerations you are taking into account?

Major Gen. Gower—That would be a minimum. As I previously mentioned, an exhibition lasts about 10 to 15 years—that is the sort of time frame. The bridge is not going to be there in 100 years time, I should not think. But certainly we are suggesting it should be approved to go there because it is such a powerful relic. There is a big constituency in the Navy who feel that, because it is hard to bring a ship to Canberra, they have been overlooked. We are very keen for that very strong and vociferous stakeholder group to be recognised, and their contribution is recognised tangibly by, in this case, the bridge.

You asked about this gallery in 10 to 15 years. We are looking to the half-life refurbishment of the Second World War gallery which we opened not all that long ago—and it is very important that you do that. Renewal is ongoing; exhibition techniques change. It is extraordinary to look back at the photographs of developments at the Australian War Memorial in the seventies when the Gallipoli gallery and other galleries were opened and to see how extraordinarily dated they are. With multimedia there are many ways you can engage people today. Schoolchildren in particular want to use those devices to learn layers of information, which you provide electronically. It will be up to subsequent management and the councils to determine this but, in my view, I would think that in 15 years there would be a new gallery. And government provides depreciation funding now for that very purpose.

Senator TROETH—That is fine. I was just interested in your view of the future and how it was going to work. If the removal of the bridge installation and the reinstatement of the stonework et cetera is required, is there any forward estimates of what that would cost?

Major Gen. Gower—No. In 15 years time subsequent management may wish to extend the building backwards—who knows. It just depends. Probably 10 years ago things were very quiet but, sadly, we have had a whole range of things we have now got to find exhibition space for. So I think it is beyond reasonable planning to think what might go on then.

Senator TROETH—All right. I would also like to say how impressed I was at the continuing development of the War Memorial and how well it encapsulates the Australian experience. Congratulations to you all.

Major Gen. Gower—Thank you very much.

Senator PARRY—I am also impressed with what is at the memorial. I have only been on this committee for some six-odd months and I must say, Major General Gower, the briefing you gave us this morning was the most succinct, direct and easiest to follow that I have had in those six months. Thank you for that. You took us on a journey at the same time which was very significant to me.

I would like to see maybe an extension to the funding in the sense that I think it should be compulsory for all schoolchildren throughout Australia to go through that facility at some stage, but that is probably stretching where we are at present. While they were in Canberra they could possibly do Parliament House at the same time. That should be a necessary part of the education process.

It is going to be very hard for a committee like this to find any fault in such a submission and what is outlined. I certainly cannot. The only thing that I wish to inquire about is whether there has been any broader thought about not undertaking this development and actually looking at a large-scale redevelopment incorporating the existing historical and heritage factors. Has that been a consideration?

Major Gen. Gower—The strategy we are implementing at the moment, and it was approved by council, is based on the construction of East Building and the occupation of East Building by staff and collection items, thereby offering up 1,700 square metres of exhibition space. We believed—and I still believe—that is appropriate. One might say that, if we had extended the building backwards, we might then get in the Centurion tank, but then I would find someone saying that we must also have some other item in.

Senator PARRY—And where does it end?

Major Gen. Gower—There is actually a limit as to how big you want a museum. In a sense we are actually pushing the boundaries in size. It is not possible to sensibly see the Australian War Memorial in one day—and I welcome people coming back. Some people want to see everything. If you want to see everything, it will take days. Others—and there have been studies on this—‘grasshopper’ around. Some might want to look at paintings; others want to look at hardware or uniforms. I think this strategy is fine at the moment. But, as I foreshadowed,

whether it is Ms Northey or someone else who is the director in 10 or 15 years time, they will have some wonderful plans and will be advised by project managers, architects and others.

Senator PARRY—I want to thank you for that. I have one final question, and if I may I will direct it to Ms Northey. It is a perfunctory question in a sense. Are you satisfied that all the facilities for disabled people, security and fire retardation and all the issues that need to be considered in a development of this nature are all covered? The submission indicates that. It is good to have on the record that you are satisfied.

Major Gen. Gower—Chair, I would so advise but I would also like to ask the project manager for her more detailed overview.

Ms Northey—We have engaged yet another independent consultant on access. They review all of our designs—these are for primary works and secondary works—to ensure that access is not only physically there but also intellectually there, which is just as important for us. We are looking at a range of new technologies that do also assist us in the galleries to provide that intellectual access to all visitors. We are always testing ourselves on that. It is not just being code compliant; it is actually expanding on top of that so that we provide access to all of our visitors as much as possible. We are also of course very concerned to make sure that the environment is safe, not only for visitors but for our staff, and that is the other level that we run across all of our designs. For example, we put in a set piece around an Iroquois helicopter that we can actually clean without running a risk of impaling ourselves on things. So it is a two-level approach that we take to this. In the discovery room we have two areas for people seeking access to the different levels by a small hoist lift and also through ramping, so we provide choice as well.

Senator PARRY—That is good. Thank you very much.

CHAIR—I think we have probably covered most of the issues, and I know that you are subject to many levels of scrutiny, but before we conclude would you give us for the public record a view on the environmental impacts of what you are proposing to do? Clearly, as the gallery expands you will have more visitors. What impact is there from this most recent proposal on the environment of the surrounds of the gallery?

Major Gen. Gower—Are you alluding specifically to car parking?

CHAIR—It means that you begin to develop a bigger footprint around the building and that there are additional facilities, such as toilets, that are required, and then there are all the other problems that go with that, like the disposal of waste and so on.

Major Gen. Gower—I will commence, and then we can get more detailed answers from Ms Northey. We believe that we have considered all those issues. With respect to the precinct, we are not planning at this stage to add additional car parking; I think it stands at 351. However, a very exciting development is to go to council at its March meeting. The development is by Richard Johnson, an architect who did our western courtyard precinct, and it is for an eastern courtyard precinct. Without jeopardising what I say to council in a couple of weeks time, we have in mind a replication on the eastern side of the structure to the west, but tiered upwards into the hill, with an underground car park and with tunnel access for disabled in inclement weather into that building, and also, although the Hyatt runs our restaurants, a higher quality restaurant

on top. That is a master plan which will be realised well after my departure, but we are thinking ahead. Part of that is car parking—underground plus spaces for buses elsewhere. We really want to minimise the impact, particularly on the Campbell residents, of buses going around and extra car parking. Sometimes we run big event and you have car parking not only in Campbell but in Reid. We would like to try and minimise that if we can.

CHAIR—So you are obviously very conscious of the need to minimise the impact on the natural environment.

Ms Northey—Very much so, and also, working with the National Capital Authority, there are very strict guidelines on the grounds in the memorial, and the memorial grounds contain commemorative devices that require very respectful treatment. It would not be appropriate to bring too much to the building. We try to keep the building as clear as possible for that type of very important function that the memorial does as well.

CHAIR—Just to take it a step further, in relation to water usage and energy usage, are you consulting with the Australian Greenhouse Office to make sure you minimise energy use and maximise—

Ms Northey—Yes. In fact, we met with the AGO yesterday and went through our plans. They are very interested in working with all the cultural institutions on a benchmarking project to actually look at that. We briefed them on what we intend to do, which is to employ much more efficient plant, not just to get greater efficiencies but also to provide better protection for our collections and to deal with visitors as well. We are also looking at, and have used in East Building, water-saving devices like the waterless urinal as one example and also energy efficient lighting wherever possible. So we are trying to bring as much into the gallery areas as possible. In the longer term, there is another project to upgrade our chiller plant, which will be undertaken by the memorial in the very near future. That, again, will provide better efficiencies in our plant.

CHAIR—What special arrangements do you have to make to protect your exhibits in terms of air quality? What are the challenges there?

Ms Northey—All museums have very strict parameters for not just temperature control but also humidity control.

CHAIR—Does that increase your draw on energy?

Ms Northey—It can, and hence museums tend to be very greedy on energy. But, with new technologies and plant in particular, it means that we can run a lot of this plant much more efficiently at a lower energy cost, because we do have to run 24 hours a day. The benefit that the memorial has, unlike some other buildings, is that the actual mass of the building means that there is some passive control there as well. So we are still working on that and we have been working on that for some time. All of our new developments take that into account.

Major Gen. Gower—We have a very comprehensive energy management plan. Our corporate services man could tell me whether it has been accredited or—

CHAIR—He is not sworn in so we cannot get him to speak.

Major Gen. Gower—I am sorry; my apologies. It has been accredited, I understand. Every month, we look at all the graphs of consumption of energy.

CHAIR—That is good to know.

Senator FORSHAW—I have one follow-up question. I note that in your submission you have said that organisations consulted with include the Campbell High School and local residents. I assume that part of that would concern what impact the construction work itself might have with vehicles coming in and out. Were any issues raised by them?

Major Gen. Gower—Not to my knowledge.

Ms Northey—We often leaflet the community to say exactly what we are doing over the next 12 to 18 months, specifically about traffic. We also talk to Campbell High School and we have kept them in the loop in all the projects we have done. They are very grateful that we actually talk to them. Some other departments in local government have not been quite as forthcoming as we have. They actually like to take the opportunity to talk about that rather than our developments.

Major Gen. Gower—I do not think we need to go to those!

Senator FORSHAW—I will not ask you about that!

Ms Northey—We enjoy a very good relationship with Campbell and Reid residents.

CHAIR—I think the Public Works Committee should institute some training programs with Major General Gower doing some training on presentations and Ms Northey doing some training sessions on public consultations. They are two areas that we often have difficulties with. Thank you very much. You may be recalled.

[1.32 pm]

ROBSON, Mr Derek James, National Secretary, Returned and Services League of Australia

Witness was then sworn or affirmed—

CHAIR—On behalf of the committee, I extend to you a warm welcome. The committee has received a submission from the RSL. The submission will be made available in a volume of submissions for the inquiry and it is also available on the committee's website. Does the RSL wish to propose amendments to the submission it has made to the committee?

Mr Robson—No.

CHAIR—I invite you to make a brief opening statement and then we might proceed to questions.

Mr Robson—Thank you. Following discussions with the War Memorial and presentations given by the director, Major General Gower, to the national executive directly, the members of the league have a very clear and succinct understanding of what is happening here and the purpose for which it is being undertaken, and, indeed, some direction towards the result and when we expect it to finish. We see it as a particularly exciting project, something that is particularly appropriate, recognising in particular over 60 years since the end of the major world war conflict. Literally hundreds of thousands of our young Australians have put themselves to the service of this nation. We think it is entirely appropriate that they be recognised at least in a similar manner to the world wars.

We support this project and look forward to its completion. We understand that elements of the gallery will not be available for our perusal and perhaps our benefit for at least 18 months, but the result is going to far outweigh any negativity in that regard. It is a wonderful project and we applaud the War Memorial. Might we also say that we look forward to a good result. We have seen, of course, in recent times the development of the administration block, the sculpture garden, East Building and, indeed, the Hall of Memory. The magnificent treatment given by the War Memorial and its staff is something that should be respected, quite frankly, by all Australians.

CHAIR—Indeed. We are all aware of the great contribution the Returned and Services League of Australia makes, not only in assisting returned service personnel but also in helping to preserve the history and making sure those lessons and memories are well and truly kept alive. So I guess my main question to you is: do you have a part to play in determining the shape of the exhibitions in the gallery and in decisions as to what is exhibited and the way in which those exhibits are organised?

Mr Robson—I think we do through the dialogue that is endless in real terms between the management of the War Memorial and the ex-service community at large. We clearly have a representation on the managing council through the RSL national president or some other

delegate from time to time who might be attuned to our beliefs. We believe that we are quite well represented and that our views are continually well represented. If there were any concerns we certainly would not wait for a project of this magnitude. Ongoing dialogue between our management and the War Memorial's is something that has never been questioned.

CHAIR—It sounds like a very harmonious arrangement. Have you any questions, Senator Parry?

Senator PARRY—I have no questions. I would have been surprised if there were not glowing endorsement. Thank you for coming.

Senator FORSHAW—I do not have any questions either, Mr Robson. You will no doubt ask questions of the War Memorial if you need to, and you have satisfied us that things are going well.

Senator TROETH—I take it that you have no reservations about the proposed plan and its implementation, Mr Robson?

Mr Robson—Not at all. Speaking on behalf of the RSL—where it has of course been discussed—we applaud the brief. If you like, we would like to have our position written in the brief but that is not always possible. Of course it is the core business and the object of the RSL that we are to encourage the perpetuation of the memory of all these issues. The War Memorial itself, in today's climate, offers a wonderful opportunity. Besides being the obvious commemorative and historical repository for military heritage and artefacts, it is also a reminder to our society as we work together to make a better world—not just for Australia but for everybody—that tolerance, understanding and respect and the like are the hallmarks we should base any argument on. The War Memorial is the place to visit prior to getting into any of those discussions.

CHAIR—Thank you very much, Mr Robson. We appreciate your taking the time to come and appear before the committee today.

Proceedings suspended from 1.38 pm to 1.57 pm

HUDA, Mr Shamsul, Principal Planner, Planning and Urban Design Unit, National Capital Authority

ROHL, Mr Todd Jason, Managing Director, Planning and Urban Design Unit, National Capital Authority

Witnesses were then sworn or affirmed—

CHAIR—I welcome you on behalf of the committee and thank you for meeting with us today. The committee has received a submission from the NCA. The submission will be made available in a volume of submissions for the inquiry and is also available on the committee's website. Does the NCA wish to propose amendments to the submission it has made to the committee?

Mr Rohl—No, we do not.

CHAIR—I invite you to make a brief opening statement before we proceed to questions.

Mr Rohl—We would like to make a brief statement. We had discussions with the Australian War Memorial very early on, prior to anything being submitted to the Department of the Environment and Heritage. In those discussions we outlined some concerns in relation to the proposal which were passed on to the War Memorial in September 2005, and then they proceeded to go on and do the referral to the Department of the Environment and Heritage. Subsequently the department asked us to provide comments on the proposal. In November we provided comments similar to those that we provided to the Australian War Memorial in our earlier discussions. Subsequent to that we were advised of the decision, and we have before you the report from considering that submission in light of the provisions of the National Capital Plan. In considering those we were satisfied that the development would be consistent with the provisions of the plan.

CHAIR—Thank you. Could you outline for us what the main elements of your concerns were?

Mr Rohl—Sure. We had three key concerns that we raised. They were about the bulk and the scale of the HMAS *Brisbane* in the courtyard, the intrusive nature of the bridge into the War Memorial and subsequently the impact that the development would have on the fabric of the building.

Senator PARRY—What was the specific impact you were concerned about?

Mr Rohl—We were concerned that opening up the building, taking parts of the building away, would break down the original fabric.

Mr Huda—The two things we were mainly interested in were the large size of the door on the western facade—the large opening into the fabric—and the bridge link that was going to cut into the original fabric of the building. They were the two main external impacts that we commented on at the time.

CHAIR—But you are quite satisfied now that they will be done in a way that is sympathetic to the building and that will not detract from the aesthetic of the building?

Mr Rohl—Yes, we are satisfied.

Senator TROETH—I want to ask you about your comment—I also asked the War Memorial about this—regarding the temporary 10-year display of the bridge from the HMAS *Brisbane*. Will it definitely need to be removed after 10 years or is that negotiable so that it could continue to be there?

Mr Rohl—We would ensure that, in terms of any works approved and submitted under the National Capital Plan, they identified it was temporary and in concert with the conditions of the DEH approval. They could come back at any time and ask for that to be extended.

CHAIR—At the time of its removal, would you then require the building facade to be fully restored to its original condition or as near as possible?

Mr Rohl—Yes, we would.

Senator TROETH—As your approval processes exist at the moment, is it likely that there will be any delay to the proposed works provided that this committee gives the go-ahead?

Mr Rohl—I cannot see any reason for a delay.

CHAIR—I think you have satisfied the questions of the committee. Thank you very much for appearing before us today. Before closing, I thank all the witnesses who have taken the time to appear before the committee today. I particularly thank the Australian War Memorial for facilitating an excellent inspection and briefing for the committee this morning.

Resolved (on motion by **Senator Parry**):

That, pursuant to the power conferred by section 2(2) of the Parliamentary Papers Act 1908, this committee authorises publication of the evidence given before it and submissions presented at public hearing this day.

Committee adjourned at 2.03 pm