

## Inquiry Administration of the National Memorials Ordinance 1928

Rosemarie Willett.

This submission was prepared as a basis for my presentation to the Inquiry on Wednesday 14 September 2011 on behalf of the Canberra Chapter of the Walter Burley Griffin Society.

Brett Odgers has sent a submission to the Inquiry on behalf of the Canberra Chapter of the Walter Burley Griffin Society. I believe the principles for CNMC decision-making should include key requirements which were highlighted in the recommendations made by Brett Odgers. Among these requirements are:

- Reference Documents and Criteria
- Expert advice including the process of accessing expert advice
- Public consultation
- Transparency

In the time available I am going to focus on Reference Documents and Criteria as necessary to the process of decision-making and public consultation in order to achieve consistency and transparency.

1. It is recognised that there is a limited supply of National Land for National Memorials in the National Capital and there are already a large number of memorials and, similarly, structures for national commemoration. There is clearly an immediate need to assess the capacity of national land to accommodate future memorials, to identify suitable sites and criteria against which to evaluate and prioritise proposals for those sites. In the interests of public consultation and transparency I **recommend** that the identification of suitable sites and criteria be included in the National Capital Plan as a strategic reference document for the public record.
2. The CNMC needs a guidelines reference document to assist in achieving consistency in decision-making. It should cover criteria and process. It should be owned by the CNMC and its secretariat, which has been suggested to be the Minister's Office rather than the National Capital Authority (NCA). At present the NCA, as author of the *Guidelines for Commemorative Works in the National Capital*, has a dual role as both an expert advisor and decision-maker as a Committee member. This may be considered to give undue weight to the NCA and may be in part resolved by a CNMC Guidelines document being available at all meetings of the CNMC and posted on a CNMC website for public access and transparency.

I came to Canberra in 1983 to work as a senior architect for MGT on this building – the Senate side as a matter of fact. In 1995 I completed the first Guidelines Document for this building '*Parliament House. Design Integrity and Management of Change. Guidelines*'. Some members of the Department of Parliamentary Services may know this document – although it may not have been in use since the old arrangement with the Joint House Department. I raise it to illustrate the heritage principles on which it was based and primarily the heritage concept 'significance'. How these Guidelines work is that 'places' within Parliament House are ascribed 'values' that contribute to significance. If the potential impact of a proposal and the place it concerns reach a certain threshold then the proposal must be referred to independent expert assessment. If the independent expert determines that the proposal will adversely affect significance and it is not suitably modified then it must be referred to a Parliamentary Inquiry.

For national memorials, memorial sites which require a higher level of assessment, including independent expert advice, may be distinguished in the Guidelines and possibly in the National Capital Plan. I **recommend** that the CNMC adopt Guidelines which take into account all the aforementioned considerations. The Guidelines should also include: the forms independent advice may take; process for access to independent expert advice and process for public consultation while still at the investigative stage before decisions are made. I also **recommend** that the Guidelines should include some inspirational material concerning the purpose and objectives of National Memorials and their relationship with Community. The Walter Burley Griffin society would like to see strong reference to the ideals of Walter Burley Griffin for the National Capital and to his Plan.

3. National memorials are obviously intended for future generations as well as present Australians and overseas visitors. Whether or not they are listed in Heritage Registers, they are heritage places. It remains therefore to refer briefly to Reference Documents used in heritage practice, under specific heritage legislation and which can be requested under the EPBC Act. Such Reference Documents are the Conservation Management Plan (CMP) and the Heritage Impact Statement (HIS) which may warrant the input of a range of independent experts

The CMP provides a full assessment of the place and, based on this assessment, ascribes the Statement of Significance; it is often the case that even when a CMP is done for a precinct, special places within the precinct merit their own CMP. The CMP can recommend opportunities for future directions and the consideration of options.

I **recommend** that a CMP is done for the Rond Terraces which is a very special place, on the lake shore and located centrally on the Land Axis. I feel it worthwhile to call to mind that the Land Axis is about an alignment of the natural monuments of the local landscape. Mt Ainslie is a natural terminus and its full conical form gives definition to the land axis. This was Griffin's intention; it was supported by the NCDC in emulating the width of Griffin's Plaisance with Anzac Park, the Portal Buildings and the continuation of this definition across the Lake with the government buildings in the Parliamentary Triangle. It was Griffin's intention too, that this also ensures an uninterrupted view of Parliament House. These considerations show why the Rond terraces, being centrally located on the land Axis, require detailed assessment in a CMP. While the Rond Terraces are included in CMPs for the Central Parklands and the Parliament House Vista these CMPs do not adequately address the values of this unique place. An assessment which fully addressed the unique values of this place would show that the proposal for the World War I and II Memorials, in addition to many other reasons given for opposing it, is in conflict with the conservation of Griffin's Land axis. The HIS can be used to assess a particular proposal against the significance established in the CMP. As noted the Rond terraces merit their own CMP which should be done before a HIS. Where national land is involved CMPs and HISs should be public documents.

Good outcomes need good Reference Documents to be used with transparent process and public consultation.