

The Australian War Memorial redevelopment of the First World War galleries

- 5.1 The Australian War Memorial (the Memorial) proposes to redevelop the First World War galleries in time for the Anzac centenary (2014-2018).
- 5.2 The objectives of the redevelopment are:
- to express the Memorial's purpose of commemorating the sacrifice of Australians who have died in war
 - to use the Memorial's collection as an integral part of communicating this commemoration
 - to understand and address modern audience needs, both in terms of exhibition interpretation and physical aspects of the gallery space.
- 5.3 The cost of the project is \$32.52 million, excluding GST.
- 5.4 The project was referred to the Committee on 29 November 2012.

Conduct of the inquiry

- 5.5 Following referral to the Committee, the inquiry was advertised on the Committee's website, by media release and in the *Canberra Times* newspaper.
- 5.6 The Committee received one submission and two supplementary submissions from the Memorial. The list of submissions can be found at Appendix A.
- 5.7 The Committee received a private briefing and conducted a site inspection, a public hearing and an in-camera hearing on 15 February 2013 in Canberra.
- 5.8 A transcript of the public hearing and the submission to the inquiry are available on the Committee's website.¹

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

Need for the works

- 5.9 The Memorial combines a shrine, a world-class museum, and an extensive archive. The Memorial's purpose is to commemorate the sacrifice of those Australians who have died in war. Its mission is to assist Australians to remember, interpret and understand the Australian experience of war and its enduring impact on Australian society. It is a unique and special place that provides a deeply emotional and personal link to those who have served.²
- 5.10 The Memorial has a legislative responsibility to maintain the national memorial, as detailed in the *Australian War Memorial Act 1980*.³
- 5.11 There are deficiencies in the current facilities that will be addressed in the project. These include:
- non-compliance with aspects of building code
 - plant equipment occupying potential exhibition space
 - aged building services
 - aged exhibition infrastructure (including low quality and inefficient lighting)
 - confusing visitor circulation throughout the galleries
 - confusing narrative (lacking geographical and chronological order) within the exhibitions presented
 - considerable conservation and cleaning work required to the historic dioramas (an integral element to the First World War galleries)
 - inadequate and below-standard display of First World War collection material and interpretative material
 - unsympathetic treatment of original building fabric (including circa 1940s ceilings).⁴
- 5.12 The Memorial considered the option of constructing a new building to enhance and improve the First World War galleries in 2010. However, redeveloping the existing galleries presented a more cost-effective way to address deficiencies.⁵
- 5.13 The redevelopment would take place in time for the upcoming Anzac Centenary (2014-2018).⁶
- 5.14 The Committee is satisfied that there is a need for the works.
-

2 The Memorial, Submission 1, p. 5.

3 The Memorial, Submission 1, pp. 5-6.

4 The Memorial, Submission 1, pp. 6-7.

5 The Memorial, Submission 1, p. 7.

6 The Memorial, Submission 1, p. 8.

Scope of the works

- 5.15 The proposed works include building and exhibition works.
- 5.16 Building works will include:
- base building works
 - plant room and mechanical services
 - electrical services
 - improving circulation of people through the galleries
 - changing the plant room location
 - fire compartment strategy
 - internal building works
 - external building works.⁷
- 5.17 Exhibition works will include a design strategy, incorporating the following elements:
- exhibition spatial planning
 - fit out considerations
 - multimedia and ICT considerations
 - graphic considerations
 - lighting, acoustic and security considerations.⁸
- 5.18 Exhibition works will include:
- cabinets, plinths and other exhibition-specific joinery
 - showcases
 - exhibition specific services
 - seating
 - graphic structures
 - public program infrastructure and defined spaces
 - object barriers
 - exhibition lighting (fixtures and track)
 - exhibition security systems
 - exhibition graphics, signage and text
 - object display and support elements
 - mannequin displays
 - hanging systems
-

7 The Memorial, Submission 1, pp. 18-30.

8 The Memorial, Submission 1, pp. 30-33

- guidelines for materials used in showcases
 - specified showcase systems
 - multimedia/ICT infrastructure (hardware and software).⁹
- 5.19 The Committee finds that the proposed scope of works is suitable to meet the need.

Cost of the works

- 5.20 The cost of the project is \$32.52 million, excluding GST. The Committee received a confidential supplementary submission detailing the project costs and held an in-camera hearing with the Memorial on these costs.
- 5.21 The Committee is satisfied that the costings for the project provided to it have been adequately assessed by the proponent agency.

Project issues

Business continuity during the redevelopment

- 5.22 The Memorial's other galleries will remain open during the redevelopment of the First World War galleries. However:
- All of the First World War galleries, other than Gallipoli, will close in early April, and then the Gallipoli galleries on 3 June 2013. There will be an interim presentation of the First World War from late November 2013 through to and including what we describe as a 'soft opening' of this redevelopment around November 2014.¹⁰
- 5.23 The closures are being publicised during public engagements, on the Memorial's website and with signage around exhibits that are currently undergoing preliminary conservation work.¹¹
- 5.24 The Memorial indicated that it would provide further information using these methods throughout the project, as well as providing information to visitors at the memorial prior to and through the closure of the galleries.¹²

Committee comment

- 5.25 The Committee acknowledges that the First World War galleries must close for the redevelopment. The Committee is pleased that the Memorial

⁹ The Memorial, Submission 1, pp. 33-34.

¹⁰ Dr B. Nelson, The Memorial, *transcript of evidence*, 15 February 2013, p. 1.

¹¹ Dr B. Nelson and Ms K. McMahon, The Memorial, *transcript of evidence*, 15 February 2013, p. 2.

¹² Dr B. Nelson and Ms K. McMahon, The Memorial, *transcript of evidence*, 15 February 2013, p. 2.

will provide an interim First World War presentation for most of the duration of the redevelopment.

- 5.26 The Committee notes the importance of publicising the closure of the First World War galleries. The Committee agrees that the Memorial must emphasise that the rest of the building will remain open during the redevelopment and that there will be an opportunity to view a presentation on the First World War during much of the redevelopment.

Community consultation

- 5.27 The Memorial has undertaken broad community consultation for the project.¹³ It has an established stakeholder management framework for redeveloping galleries and designing exhibitions, which includes consultation with both the veteran community and the broader community.¹⁴ This framework involves ongoing evaluation of the project and the galleries, including evaluations prior to commencement and at the conclusion of the project.¹⁵

- 5.28 The Memorial notes that the consultation for this project is different from other gallery redevelopments as there are no First World War veterans left alive:

Our approach consists of awareness-raising and our stakeholder management plan for this specific project has a very detailed list of stakeholders that we consider should be consulted with regard to what we are doing in the project. That goes from the Prime Minister and members of parliament, [to] RSLs and school groups.¹⁶

- 5.29 For this project, the Light Horse arm is a key stakeholder:

There is an association to deal with the Light Horse, the AE1 and AE2 association, and we have done some specific consultation with regard to this group.¹⁷

- 5.30 The Memorial is also engaging with state governments, the Shrine of Remembrance in Melbourne and other cultural institutions in Canberra.¹⁸

13 The Memorial, Submission 1, pp. 10-11.

14 Ms K. McMahan, The Memorial, *transcript of evidence*, 15 February 2013, p. 5.

15 Ms K. McMahan, The Memorial, *transcript of evidence*, 15 February 2013, pp. 5-6.

16 Ms K. McMahan, The Memorial, *transcript of evidence*, 15 February 2013, p. 5.

17 Ms K. McMahan, The Memorial, *transcript of evidence*, 15 February 2013, p. 5.

18 Dr B. Nelson, The Memorial, *transcript of evidence*, 15 February 2013, p. 6.

Committee comment

- 5.31 The Committee believes that consultation is essential for any project, but is particularly pertinent for this project, as many people have strong personal connections to the Memorial and its collection.
- 5.32 The Committee acknowledges that the Memorial has conducted thorough consultation this far. The Committee has not received any correspondence or submissions indicating any dissatisfaction with the project or the Memorial's community consultation.
- 5.33 The Committee expects the Memorial to enable ongoing consultation, particularly with veterans groups, throughout the project. The Committee expects the Memorial to undertake extensive community consultation for all future redevelopments or changes to the Memorial.

Asbestos and other hazardous materials

- 5.34 The Memorial commissioned a hazardous materials survey of the project area which determined that there was some asbestos present:
- ... there is no asbestos internally, in the building, [however] there is some presence of asbestos in the mortar joints for the sandstone. The only area where this project touches that is in the parapet where we are building a new plant room to free up exhibition floor space below.¹⁹
- 5.35 The Memorial stated that it intends to remove the asbestos (and other hazardous materials found in the survey) before any other project work begins. The Memorial advised that the industry standard practice is that remediation work is usually done in normal working hours. The remediation area would be fully sealed with negative air pressure. The Memorial assured the Committee that all work would comply with the Building Code of Australia requirements.²⁰
- 5.36 Furthermore, some lead paint was identified in the heritage ceilings. The Memorial explained how it would deal with this hazardous material:
- There is a process described for its appropriate handling and removal. We are providing full disclosure of that to the tenderers and we will be looking at their management strategy before we award contracts and then monitoring it independently during the construction.²¹

19 Mr P. Root, The Memorial, *transcript of evidence*, 15 February 2013, p. 3.

20 Mr P. Root, The Memorial, *transcript of evidence*, 15 February 2013, p. 3.

21 Mr P. Root, The Memorial, *transcript of evidence*, 15 February 2013, p. 6.

Committee comment

- 5.37 The Committee notes the presence of asbestos and other hazardous materials in the building.
- 5.38 The Committee is satisfied that the Memorial has adequate processes and procedures in place to safely handle and remove these materials.

Construction issues

- 5.39 Possible issues during construction include increased traffic at and around the Memorial and the safety of people, particularly visitors to the Memorial and students at the neighbouring high school.
- 5.40 Regarding traffic, the building works would be labour intensive and at the Memorial site. The Memorial estimated that there would be no more than 40 people on site at any one time.²²
- 5.41 For the exhibition works, most of the fabrication or production would be done elsewhere, then brought to the site and installed sequentially, thus reducing the traffic and the number of contractors at and around the site.²³
- 5.42 The Memorial indicated that this project would not be the largest it has undertaken. The Memorial stated that previous projects have been constructed and managed 'without any serious impact on visitors.'²⁴
- 5.43 Regarding the safety of pedestrians at and around the Memorial during construction, traffic is a key consideration:

... there is a site compound adjacent to the building, just opposite the administration building, which is where we have previously set up site compounds. That is where the sheds and whatnot are for the workers on site. We tend to organise deliveries out of hours, either before or after visiting hours. But where deliveries are required or material is required to be taken away during visiting hours, our contractors, when they submit their tender, have to submit a traffic management plan, amongst a whole range of other plans, as to how all of that is going to be taken care of. We are there to supervise that.²⁵

22 Mr P. Root, The Memorial, *transcript of evidence*, 15 February 2013, p. 3.

23 Mr P. Root, The Memorial, *transcript of evidence*, 15 February 2013, p. 3.

24 Mr P. Root, The Memorial, *transcript of evidence*, 15 February 2013, p. 3.

25 Mr P. Root, The Memorial, *transcript of evidence*, 15 February 2013, p. 4.

Committee comment

- 5.44 The Committee accepts that the Memorial has considered the local traffic flow, and the presence and safety of visitors to the Memorial and people in nearby areas, in developing the project.

Final Committee comment

- 5.45 The Committee acknowledges that the Memorial is a key attraction for visitors to Canberra, and many locals and visitors spend considerable time at the Memorial each year. The Committee notes that there were over 800,000 visitors to the Memorial last year, including many students and international visitors.
- 5.46 The Committee notes that while visitor numbers at cultural institutions in Canberra are declining slightly, the Memorial has had less of a decline than other cultural institutions.
- 5.47 The Committee supports the work of the Memorial and encourages it to promote its vision and its collection to all visitors and Australians, through a combination of various traditional and modern technologies and displays.
- 5.48 The Committee's inspection of the First World War galleries provided valuable information to the inquiry. During the inspection, the Committee viewed dioramas which were in the process of being cleaned and restored.
- 5.49 Separate to this project, the Committee understands that the Memorial is planning to develop a presentation on Afghanistan. The Committee commends the Memorial for this commitment.
- 5.50 The Committee was satisfied with the evidence provided by the Memorial regarding the proposed redevelopment of the First World War galleries. The Committee is satisfied that the project has merit in terms of need, scope and cost.
- 5.51 Having regard to its role and responsibilities contained in the *Public Works Committee Act 1969*, the Committee is of the view that this project signifies value for money for the Commonwealth and constitutes a project which is fit for purpose, having regard to the established need.

Recommendation 3

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: The Australian War Memorial redevelopment of the First World War galleries.

