



# Journalist outflanked for AWM job

By Noel Towell

Veteran journalist Les Carlyon was set to be elected the next chairman of the Australian War Memorial's governing council before the federal government removed him from the board in February.

But in the wake of the move by Veterans' Affairs Minister Warren Snowdon, the council members rejected an ALP-linked candidate for the post in favour of their own man.

Carlyon's second three-year term on the 10-member council expires at the end of April. He was interested in continuing work at the memorial.

Two serving board members have told *The Canberra Times* that the former newspaper editor was approached last year by the memorial's outgoing chairman, General Peter Cosgrove, to take over the role



**MANOEUVRES:** Les Carlyon, left, and veterans' minister Warren Snowdon.

for the next three years. But despite Carlyon having the support of the majority of council members, Mr Snowdon - who appoints the board but has no role in electing the chairman - told Carlyon in February that he would not be offered another term, making the *Gallipoli* author ineligible for the chairman's job.

Carlyon is a former editor of *The*

*Age*, part of the Fairfax group that also publishes *The Canberra Times*.

National president of the RSL, Rear Admiral Ken Doolan, was elected in a board meeting last month, defeating former West Australian Labor MP Graham Edwards in the vote.

Mr Edwards stood for the chairman's job after the failure of a motion at the March 8 meeting to elect an "interim chairman".

An interim choice would have allowed the new chair to be chosen from among the three incoming council members; writer Peter Fitz-Simons, who will replace Carlyon, former Defence Department secretary Allan Hawke and Major-General Paul Stephens.

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Dr Hawke said that the minister's office had made it clear to him it had no role in electing the memorial's chair.

Mr Snowdon declined to be interviewed but issued a statement.

"The election of the chair of the Australian War Memorial Council is entirely a matter for council members," the minister said, describing Carlyon's contribution as "significant".

Acting War Memorial director Nola Anderson declined to be interviewed. "Les Carlyon's term fini-

shes at the end of April," she said through a spokeswoman.

Carlyon also declined an interview but said Rear Admiral Doolan had his full support as council chairman.

General Cosgrove and fellow council member Kerry Stokes were approached but did not comment.



# Libs slam minister's treatment of Carlyon

By Noel Towell  
and Bianca Hall

The Coalition has reacted with fury to revelations veteran journalist Les Carlyon was removed from the Australian War Memorial governing council at the request of Veterans Affairs Minister Warren Snowdon.

Two serving board members have told *The Canberra Times* that the former newspaper editor was approached last year by the memorial's outgoing chairman, General Peter Cosgrove, to take over the role for the next three years.

Despite Mr Carlyon having the support of the majority of council members, Mr Snowdon told him in February he would not be offered another term, making him ineligible.

Opposition veterans affairs spokesman Michael Ronaldson said yesterday he was "deeply disturbed" by the revelations.

"Minister Snowdon cut Mr Carlyon's plans down and dumped him from council, thwarting the council's attempts to elect their own chairman," he said.

Mr Snowdon appoints the board but has no role in electing the chairman. But in the wake of the decision to remove Mr Carlyon, the council rejected an ALP-linked candidate for the post in favour of its own man.

National RSL president, Rear Admiral Ken Doolan, was elected in a board meeting last month, defeating former West Australian Labor MP Graham Edwards in the vote.

Mr Edwards decided to stand for the chairman's position after the failure of a motion at the March 8 meeting to elect an "interim chairman".

An interim choice would have allowed the new chairman to be chosen from among the three incoming council members; writer Peter FitzSimons, who will replace Mr Carlyon, former Defence Department secretary Allan Hawke and Major-General Paul Stevens.

Mr Ronaldson said the Government should answer allegations Mr Snowdon had tried to politicise the board.

"After being embarrassed by the leaking of General Cosgrove's letters pleading for more money, then being dragged kicking and screaming to do anything about it, it seems Minister Snowdon wanted to put a 'friendly' face onto council to stifle any future discontent."

Mr Snowdon's spokeswoman yesterday said the Minister had wanted to reinvigorate the council, and Mr Edwards - a Vietnam veteran - was well qualified for the chairman's role.

By removing Mr Carlyon, Mr Snowdon removed his eligibility for the chairman's role.

But his spokeswoman said, "The Minister categorically rejects these baseless allegations."

"Mr Carlyon's second three-year appointment to the council expires at the end of April. He will be replaced by the well respected Australian author Mr Peter FitzSimons."