

Australian Government

Department of Veterans' Affairs

NATIONAL OFFICE

Mr Alistair Sands
Secretary
Finance and Public Administration
References Committee
Parliament House
CANBERRA ACT 2600

Dear Mr Sands

Further to my letter of 25 November 2005 I am writing to provide you with information in response to questions taken on notice at the 17 June 2005 hearing on the inquiry into matters relating to the Gallipoli Peninsula.

My response to the nine questions taken on notice follows.

- Q1 A copy of the report dated March 2005 is attached. Terms of reference are detailed in the first paragraph.
- Q2-5 Provision of this information is dependent on input and agreement by the Commonwealth War Graves Commission. I will write to you again when I have ascertained their position on the matter.
- Q4 Attached are two statements from the Commonwealth War Graves Commission issued in March and a shorter statement (undated) which went up on their website in April.
- Q6 We are currently reviewing the records for copies of any documents provided by Dr Cameron.

- Q7 Briefings to the Minister are confidential to the Minister.
- Q8 We are currently reviewing the records to determine whether the then Secretary consulted with the Department of the Environment and Heritage.
- Q9 Provision of this information is dependent on input and agreement by the Commonwealth War Graves Commission. I will write to you again when I have ascertained their position on the matter.

I hope to be able to write to you again in the near future in relation to those outstanding matters detailed above.

Yours sincerely



Mark Sullivan

2 December 2005

The Commonwealth War Graves Commission is aware of public concern regarding the development work currently being undertaken in the ANZAC Cove area of the Gallipoli Peninsula.

The Commission would like to reassure the public that our representatives on the peninsula have carried out an extensive examination of the area and have reported that no human remains have been found and that our cemeteries and memorials remain unaffected by the development work.

The Turkish authorities gave full consideration into the likelihood of any discoveries and deemed this unlikely given that the development is merely strengthening and widening an existing road and the area was extensively cleared by the Graves Concentration Units in the 1920s.

While the Commission does not have the authority to protect areas outside of our cemetery or memorial boundaries, we shall continue to liaise closely with the Turkish authorities and the representatives of the Australian and New Zealand governments, with the aim of ensuring that, should human remains be discovered, which could be those of Turkish or Commonwealth soldiers they will be treated with the utmost dignity and given an appropriate burial.

The Commission is confident that the Turkish authorities, who retain custodianship of the Gallipoli Peninsula and who have taken great steps to preserve this historic landscape, will find an acceptable balance between the needs to accommodate the increasing numbers of pilgrims to the area and the preservation of the Peace Park for future generations.

14 March 2005

Ends.

As a result of public concern regarding the development work currently being undertaken in the ANZAC Cove area of the Gallipoli Peninsula, The Commonwealth War Graves Commission would like to reassure the public that our regional representatives have carried out an extensive examination of the area and have found no evidence that human remains have been disturbed.

The Commission would also like to reassure the public that our cemeteries and memorials remain unaffected by the development work. They stand ready to receive the thousands of pilgrims who will pay their respects to the fallen, in this, the 90th anniversary of the ill-fated Gallipoli campaign.

Ends

The Commonwealth War Graves Commission is aware of the public's concerns regarding the development work currently being undertaken in the ANZAC Cove area of the Gallipoli Peninsula.

It is understood that this Turkish initiative, to widen an existing coastal road, is designed to improve access to the area for the many thousands of pilgrims who travel each year to pay their respects to those who died during the Gallipoli campaign.

The Commission is responsible for the maintenance of the cemeteries and memorials to those Commonwealth servicemen and women who died during the two world wars and we can assure the public that those on the Peninsula are safe from any disturbance. The Commission's Royal Charter does not give us the authority to protect areas outside of our cemetery or memorial boundaries.

The Commission is confident that the Turkish authorities, who retain custodianship of the Gallipoli Peninsula and who have taken great steps to preserve this historic landscape, will find an acceptable balance between the needs to accommodate the increasing numbers of pilgrims to the area and the preservation of the Peace Park for future generations.

The Commission has, to date, received no reports that any human remains have been disturbed during the course of the development. Indeed, full consideration into the likelihood of any discoveries was given by the Turkish authorities who deemed this unlikely given that the development is merely strengthening and widening an existing road and the area was extensively cleared by the Graves Concentration Units in the 1920s.

We shall, however, be discussing this issue with the Turkish authorities and the representatives of our member governments, including Australia and New Zealand, with the aim of ensuring that any possible disturbance is kept to a minimum. Should human remains be discovered, which could be those of Turkish or Commonwealth soldiers they will be treated with dignity and given an appropriate burial.

CWGC

7 March 2005

Australian Government Department of Veterans' Affairs
Office of Australian War Graves

Inspection of Construction of Roadway Widening Near Anzac Cove
Commmorative Site

March 2005

This report takes into account the particular instructions and requirements of our client. It is not intended for and should not be relied upon by any third party and no responsibility is undertaken to any third party.

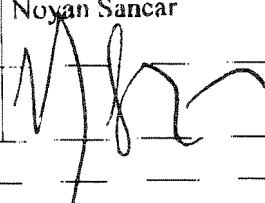
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1. INTRODUCTION

We received instructions from Department of Veterans' Affairs, Office of Australian War Graves to inspect the ongoing construction on the access routes to the Anzac Cove Commemorative Site with respect to the safety of traffic and visitors during the Anzac Day Ceremonies on April 25, 2005.

We visited and inspected the construction works. We held meetings with the state authorities who explained that the construction has been delayed due to interruptions, but was progressing now to make the roadway safe for traffic before the Anzac Day.

2. INSPECTION OF THE CONSTRUCTION ROUTE

I visited the Anzac Cove region and the access roads on May 11, 2005. There, I was hosted by Nuri Ozcr Erbay of Nik Construction, Ltd., who are the contactors for DVA in the preparation of Anzac Day Commemorative Site and who know the region and recent progress of the roadway construction as well.

The construction work was ongoing at four locations in the vicinity of Beach Cemetery, Anzac Cove, Ari Burnu and Anzac Commemorative Site. Our observations and comments are as follows:

The width of the original roadway was inadequate for the increased traffic volume as it is expected to be during the day of the ceremonies, however further constraints occurred due to coastline erosion damaging some parts of the road. This situation was evident even during our survey of March 1998 which we conducted for CWGC.

Any remedial measures to be taken from the coastal side to reconstruct the roadway would be visually too much obtrusive, especially if any widening is also needed. Therefore, the designer of the Turkish Ministry of Environment and Forestation apparently had to take the other option of shifting the road axis inland.

The widening of the roadway had been facilitated by introducing berms into the cuts and to stabilise the soil and to provide safety for the traffic and the visitors. Depositing of the cut earth near the coast line side of the road had been exercised at one location near Shell Green Cemetery (see enclosed photo) but this had been stopped before any intrusion into the water line had taken place.

We could not identify any other location in the vicinity where a similar or more serious situation had occurred. Therefore, we could not identify any new risk of the fill material affecting the currents and the waves in the sea and introducing new erosion patterns around Anzac Cove, as mentioned in some of the news media.

We observed the surfaces of the cuts and fill areas as shown in the enclosed photos. Also, we inspected these work sites during most of the day. We did not encounter any remains of marked or unmarked cemeteries. We think that the information which appeared in some of the news media in this respect was more of a concern - with good intentions - that it might have happened rather than reflecting actual facts and observations.

The general quality of construction fell somewhat short of our expectations and wishes, however this would be reflected in the long term durability of roadway rather than traffic safety.

During site visit, we have encountered Ambassador Jean Dunn and Consul – General Paul Given. They requested information on the status of the roadway construction and I verbally gave them a summary of the above mentioned comments.

3. MEETINGS WITH THE PEACE PARK MANAGEMENT

We had a discussion with Ayhan Ece, the manager of Peace Park.

I expressed my concern over the fact that the pace of construction for the roadway widening works were progressing rather slowly and inquired about the construction schedule. Mr. Can commented that this construction contract was awarded by the Office of the County Governor of Eceabat, according to the design and tender documents prepared by Geosis Engineering and Consulting, Ltd., the design consultants of the Ministry of Environment and Forestation in Ankara. The progress was somewhat behind schedule due to interruptions because of the complaints of some citizen groups, but soon afterwards, the work resumed with the objective of providing safe access for traffic firstly during the Turkish ceremonies on March 18 th, and then during Anzac Ceremonies on April 25 th.

We discussed the technical aspects of the works with M.Turhan Akat, the assistant manager of Peace Park.

He mentioned that the old road was totally inadequate for the projected traffic volume during the Anzac Day ceremonies. Also, erosion had damaged certain parts of the road, making it unsafe for traffic. Improvement of the road had been requested by the governments of Australia and New Zealand as well. Therefore, the Turkish government had prepared a design for widening the road and construction of parking areas for the busses. In our later communication with the Peace Park management, we explained that this must be a misunderstanding, because any requests which might have been made would be with regard to local repairs of the roadway rather than a total widening, and that widening of the roadway was not needed for the ceremonies since busses would always be routed as one way traffic on that day.

For this roadway construction, the ministry have commissioned as the supervising engineer Ycni Yapi Consulting, Inc. of Ankara and awarded the contract to Yanki Construction Co. of Ankara.

To preserve the natural setting of the terrain the excavations for widening the roadway was initially kept at a minimum, with rather steep side slopes. However, during actual construction, the work has encountered slope stability problems which would have adverse effects on traffic safety. Therefore the Ministry have asked their designers to change the design in favour of less steep slopes and introducing berms where necessary. This has increased the volume of excavation, with more influence on the natural landscape; but this modification has been found to be absolutely necessary from the point of view of traffic safety with regard to slope stability.

Now the County Governor's Office of Eceabat and the contractor are working towards completing the roadways in a condition that is safe for the traffic during the ceremonies, and they say that they will achieve it.

We requested Mr. Akat to ask the District Governor's Office to try to achieve slope stability by making minimum amounts of cut for the excavations.

4. MEETING IN THE COUNTY GOVERNOR'S OFFICE

During our next visit to site, we visited the Office of the County Governor of Eccabat on March 21th, 2005. Tugba Bahar, the financial manager of the construction contracts verified us by the contract documents that the roadway was being upgraded to 7.00 meter asphaltic pavement width, with 100 kg size stone riprap covering of the coast side slopes against wave erosion at distances from Alcitepe junction of km 1+150 to 1+400, 1+810 to 1+890, 1+950 to 2+010. The widening of the pavement at the Commemorative site is specified to be the same as existing unique granite stone pavoirs.

We received the telephone contacts of the supervising engineers, Ycniş Yapi Ltd. office in Ankara and called them up for information on the planned progress of construction before the Anzac Day. They informed that, contrary to our wish that the works are suspended in the immediate vicinity of the Commemorative Site, they have planned to finish that region in particular, including the culverts at both sides, to the North and South of the site. This situation will be taken into consideration in the planning of the preparations for the ceremonial functions.

We also arranged contact with the site supervising engineer of Ycni Yapi Consulting, Inc. for liaison throughout the progress of the works. They expressed their wish and intention for cooperation and liaison for the best preparation of the roadway as being safe for the ceremonial functions on April 25 th even if it would not be possible to complete the roadway contract fully.

5. PHOTOGRAPHS OF THE INSPECTION OF THE ROADWAY CONSTRUCTION ON THE ACCESS ROADS NEAR ANZAC COVE



Typical cut for roadway widening construction which carries no evidence of any cemeteries being encountered or damaged

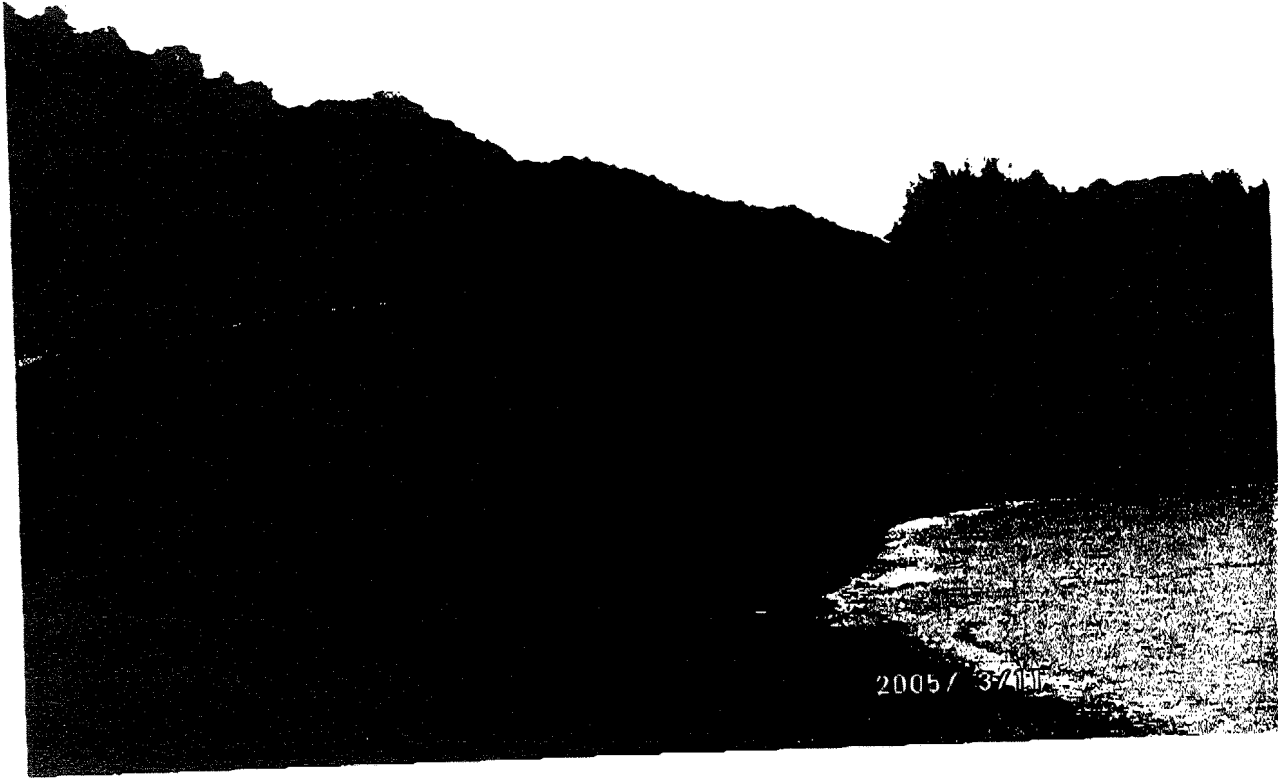


2005 / 3 / 11

Bus park construction near Ari Burnu



Roadway widening construction near Ari Burnu



Spill of excavated earth near Shell Green Cemetery which has been stopped