



MINISTER FOR VETERANS' AFFAIRS

His Excellency Mr Osman Pepe
Minister for Environment and Forests
Government of the Republic of Turkey
Ankara
TURKEY

Your Excellency

I am writing as the Australian Government Minister responsible for the planning and preparation of the Anzac Day services in the Gallipoli Peninsula Peace Park. My colleague, Senator Robert Hill, Minister for Defence expressed his appreciation of your support when he met with you earlier this year.

I would like to add my appreciation for the widespread goodwill among the Turkish people in allowing these services to be conducted annually. The Gallipoli experience seems destined to become an ever-increasing ingredient of overseas travel, particularly for young Australians.

The Director, Office of Australian War Graves (OAWG) within my Department liaises with the New Zealand Government and our respective Ambassadors in Ankara to ensure full cooperation with Turkish authorities in the preparation and conduct of these services. The Director, Air Vice-Marshal Gary Beck AO (Retd) also manages the contracts for the maintenance of the site undertaken by Dr Nuri Ozer Erbay of Nik Insaat Ltd, Istanbul on behalf of the Australian and New Zealand Governments. AVM Beck will be visiting Ankara late August 2004 and it is hoped that he will be able to call on you with the new Australian Ambassador, Her Excellency Ms Jean Dunn.

Our outgoing Ambassador, His Excellency Mr Jon Philp, has advised that he recently discussed with you some of the difficulties caused by the increasing numbers of visitors each year. He noted that you were prepared to consider formal proposals to increase the area of the Anzac Commemorative Site and other measures to ease congestion. For that I am most grateful and I understand that you are also planning to improve general access and camping areas on the Peninsula to accommodate the increasing numbers of visitors annually. He reports that those increases are occurring throughout the year as both the Turkish people as well as foreign visitors come to appreciate the military history of the Gallipoli area and its focus on preserving world peace.

As you may know, we constructed the Anzac Commemorative Site as the first project undertaken within the newly designated Peace Park and in keeping with the guidance to preserve the archaeological, cultural and military heritage of the area as well as the native flora. Significant steps were taken to control soil erosion and to limit sea erosion of the beach. ~~After five years, it seems this project has been most successful in meeting~~ its objectives. Each year it is attended by an Australian Government senior minister who also attends the Turkish International Service as well as the other services conducted over these two days. Hundreds of visitors inspect the site and information panels each week and it is now the largest annual Anzac Day gathering in the world.

Our current difficulties stem from its success. We are expecting numbers to keep increasing in line with the growth in popularity of battlefield tours and in particular, with overseas travel trends of young Australians and New Zealanders. With the 90th anniversary of the Battle of Canakkale in 2005, we are expecting an increase above the design limit of 15,000 visitors. It is for that reason I seek your agreement to consider the proposals outlined in the attachment that relate to the growth in visitor numbers on Anzac Day. Noting the satellite image of the current site attached, I have asked the Director to look at beautifying the site by improving its overall shape while seeking an increase in area.

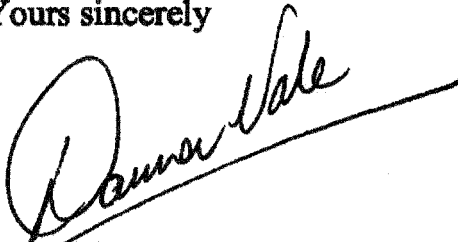
Among the attached proposals is one seeking improved access to mains water. I recognise the water shortages that exist in the area and I stress this proposal would result in a major net reduction in usage, even allowing for the increased irrigation area proposed. The problem is that water is currently transported from wells further to the north and the elimination of this practice would result in much improved underground supplies in the area. This site is popular with all visitors and I would like to see it gain the same access to water as other memorial sites in the area.

We are grateful to Turkish authorities for the considerable progress that has already been made with the creation of the loop road and one-way coach traffic on Anzac Day. However, the growth in visitation suggests that further improvements would be welcomed to ensure safety of coach passengers. If Ridge Road past Lone Pine and Chunuk Bair to the Kemalyeri Memorial could be widened, it would enable two-way or passing traffic to flow again and would ease the considerable delays in coach departures after the services. Among the attachments is one showing the current traffic flow pattern and relevant commemorative sites within the designated Anzac Area of Gallipoli Peninsula.

My government stands ready to consider any solution and to assist in any way we are able to ease the traffic congestion that occurs on Anzac Day each year. I am especially keen to solve the lengthy walking distances elderly and infirm visitors face attending the Dawn Service, over seven kilometres in some cases. AVM Beck will be keen to explore possible solutions to this problem with our Ambassador and relevant authorities.

I look forward to the opportunity that we may meet and again express my sincere appreciation for your strong support in accepting these proposals for consideration by your Ministry.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Danna Vale', written over a horizontal line.

DANNA VALE MP

02 AUG 2004

Attachments:

- A. Summary of Proposed Improvements
- B. Visitors after Dawn Service in 2003
- C. Map of Anzac Area, Gallipoli Peninsula
- D. Satellite image of Anzac Commemorative Site
- E. Proposed expansion of area
- F. Mobile toilet trailer site
- G. Survey of existing site
- H. Proposed installation of bollards beyond temporary stakes
- J-M Various images of site
- N. Satellite image of Lone Pine War Cemetery
- O. Visitors at Australian National Service, Lone Pine 2004

PROPOSED IMPROVEMENTS TO ANZAC COMMEMORATIVE SITE AT GALLIPOLI PENINSULA PEACE PARK

Approvals are sought from relevant Turkish Government Ministries for the following proposals designed to accommodate increasing visitor numbers at Anzac Day services held 25 April on Gallipoli Peninsula.

Site Enlargement

Approval is sought to widen the site by up to seven metres as shown on Attachment E by the removal of native bushes and re-turfing. The aim would be to beautify the site by re-shaping it while maintaining the central axis of the site focussed on The Sphinx. The increased area outlined over the image of the site would allow attendance by an estimated 20,000 visitors.

An additional adjoining area parallel to the road between the site and the toilet area is proposed to enable video, generator and media vehicles to park off-site. Beautification of this area is also sought with adequate fill and underground drainage and resurfacing in gravel or bitumen.

Toilet Installation

Mobile toilet trailers are used to ensure that service facilities are available only when needed, in keeping with the concept of preserving the native environment. But the areas cleared for the toilet installations both at the Anzac Commemorative Site and at Lone Pine are unsightly and approval is sought to beautify these areas with installation of timber retaining walls and gravel surfaces. Attachment F demonstrates there is scope for improvement.

Mains-water Supply

Access to mains water supply would allow the in-ground irrigation system already installed to be used at night. At present, water is transported and applied daily by hand-held hoses. Wastage through excessive evaporation on summer days would be eliminated and consumption of bore water transported to the site would reduce by seventy-five percent, while fuel consumed in transporting the water would be eliminated. Funds saved could be diverted to other water projects on the Peninsula.

Installation of Traffic Bollards

The area of the site above the cobbled road shown at Attachment H is used as a turnaround facility by coaches, trucks and private vehicles with consequent damage to irrigation system and turf. Approval is sought to install high quality bollards with chain fence to protect the area from heavy traffic. The bollards would be installed in accordance with Turkish road regulations.

Coach Turnaround Facilities

A suitable turnaround facility for coaches, north of the Commonwealth War Graves Commission maintenance area, would be a most useful addition. Such a facility may solve the problem of having visitors walk many kilometres to attend the dawn service. A turnaround facility constructed adjacent to the Ari Burnu War Cemetery would similarly prove most useful in resolving traffic congestion with official vehicles. More importantly, such facilities would be used by all traffic throughout the year.

Lone Pine War Cemetery

Attachment N shows the Lone Pine War Cemetery. It is intended to accommodate the increased visitor numbers at the Australian National Service by a combination of increased use of temporary stands and by better utilisation of the parking area to the immediate north of the cemetery.

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