

Picture of ANZAC Cove as published on the cover of the Dawn Service Program

**Submission to the Australian Senate Committee of Inquiry into
Matters Relating to the Gallipoli Peninsular.**

By Ian Tait, Geoffrey Ostling and 25 others.

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1.0 Introduction

I am the Principal of an Ecological Consultancy called EcoSearch Consultants Pty Ltd based in Picton NSW. I am a qualified ecologist. Although my professional activities are more associated with threatened species assessment I have undertaken sufficient assignments in the area of heritage and ecotourism to understand many of the issues involved in the recent constructions and other activities at the Anzac site in Gallipoli. I have agreed to prepare the attached report on behalf of myself, Geoffrey Ostling and 25 others

On the 24th and 25th of this month I was visiting Turkey, as part of a larger group of Australians, in order to be part of the annual ANZAC Day Commemoration activities. Our group is an older group, average age 60+ years and except for two particularly elder persons generally of good fitness and mobility. Our group included a number of veterans and the descendants of veterans.

Many of our group were aware of recent reports in the media of the roadworks and other construction activity at the site. Some of our group had attended earlier commemorations and were returning and were able to make a comparison of the effects of the developments.

After touring the site on the 24th and attending the commemoration activities on the next day our group of 27 people were overwhelmingly critical of some aspects of the developments and the organisation of the events.

Also with the benefit of my experience of management of sites of ecological and heritage value I was greatly disturbed by what appeared to be management regime that I would consider inadequate and not up to "best practise".

Several periods of discussion occurred between my fellow travellers during which it was agreed that a substantive report be prepared and forwarded to the Prime Minister of Australia with courtesy copies being sent to other relevant authorities.

The comments contained within the document are meant in the spirit of constructive criticism. It is our hope that our comments will lead to positive changes in the management and conduct of the ANZAC ceremonies and the Gallipoli site.

Our group strongly wanted it known that we appreciate the generosity and grace of the Turkish Government and the hospitality of the Turkish people in allowing this commemoration, which has become so significant to Australians and New Zealanders, to take place on their soil.

2.0 Constraints

This report was prepared in a short time with limited opportunity to research many background details. A number of assumptions have been made with respect to government actions and policies. These have generally been identified in the report. The conclusions are however mostly based on direct observations and stand alone.

3.0 Issues

This report is divided into three separate issues of concern.

Part A concerns the conduct of the Ceremonies and arrangements for the movement of people.

Part B concerns the conduct of recent construction works

Part C concerns overall management of the ANZAC and Gallipoli site.

3.1 Part A. – Management of the Ceremonies and the movement of people.

It is our understanding that the management of the war cemeteries and related war memorials including the organising of commemorative occasions is under the authority of the Commonwealth War Graves Commission.

The nature and conduct of the ceremonies both at the Dawn Service and later at the individual Memorial sites was generally considered appropriate, poignant and memorable. Some members of our group expressed the opinion that they would have liked to see more “reverence”

However there was universal condemnation of the facilities at the sites and the management of people into and out of the sites.

3.1.1. It appeared that the number of people attending the ceremonies (reported in the media at 20000 people) at both the Dawn Service and Lone Pine Cemetery service exceeded those expected. The number of seating places was completely filled and open ground space provided was inadequate.

The organizers made several announcements during the evening before the dawn service requesting the crowd to move or sit up to make room for more people. This was just not practical and the organizers seemed to be unaware they were making impossible requests.

There appeared to be no contingency plans for management of the excess numbers of people.

3.1.2. There was only one central pathway available for crowd movement, exit and access to toilet facilities. For most of the evening this “corridor” was in hopeless gridlock making passage from one side of the event to the other highly difficult.

It was impractical to cross through the crowd to use the port-a-loos which were located on only one side of the event. People on the other side were forced to “use the bushes”. At least one of our parties was embarrassed by an “accident” because he could not get to the toilets.

There was no signage directing the crowd to seating/camping areas or the toilets.

It was my observation from my position in one of the rear stands that had there been some sort of disturbance that caused a “stampede” then many people would have fallen and been seriously injured.

3.1.3. The ANZAC Cove site is accessed from two roads. One narrow road from the north and another from the south past ANZAC cove.

It appears that the audience was only allowed entrance from the northern access. Our bus arrived at about 10 pm the previous evening. We were required to walk past several hundred buses parked single file on the side of the narrow road into the ceremony site, a distance of about 5

kms. The access from the south appears to have only been used for the dignitaries and service vehicles.

In the planning and design for the road upgrade we believe a number of questions need to be addressed

a. *Why was no centralised parking area or even a bus set-down and turn around area on the northern access road to facilitate the movement of the general public.*

b. *Why was it necessary to “upgrade” the southern road which had far less traffic while the road for the “public” clearly had a greater need.?*

c. *Were alternative access proposals or alternate arrangements for the movement of the general public considered as part of the planning and design process. ?*

- 3.1.4. The ceremonies required the people to walk up the hill to the Australian and New Zealand War Memorials. There was no explicit instructions or maps in the program and/or signage on the ground. It was a case of “follow the leader” and having faith that someone knew what was going on.

There was no signage or instructions for the location of facilities and conveniences at either the Dawn Ceremony or the Lone Pine events. It appeared that the food stalls arranged by the local people were located without any planning or forethought and the areas designated for general public lacked any signage or barriers.

The full days events should have been better publicised and some signage put out. Expectations from the organisers as to movement and facilities could have been included in the program.

- 3.1.5. Much criticism was made of the fact that the crowd “stood on graves and left large amounts of rubbish”. I plead Guilty your honour. The crowd exceeded the seating capacity by 50-100%’ There was no alternative to sitting in the graveyard area.

The tour operators in many cases provided packed food for their clients and there were a number of food and drink stalls operated by local people but otherwise there was no food or water for people that may have been on the site and part of the events for more than 24 hours. There was no rubbish collection system available or if it was I did not see it and I made a determined effort to find before adding it to a common stack that had begun to appear beside one seating stand.

There was no announcement or signage asking us to take our rubbish away with us.

Clearly another failing in the logistics of the day

- 3.1.6. I have no information as to how buses were organised for the day. There appeared to be some co-ordination between the tour operators as they had numbered the buses and organised common pick up and delivery points.

However it was clear that comfort and convenience of the spectators was a secondary thought to the organizers. We were required to walk for about an hour from the closest approach our bus could make to the site and then walk up the hill for about another hour to the cemeteries. I am sure most enjoyed the experience but the lack of an alternative for all but the most elderly and disabled meant that it was a hardship for some.

Most importantly, we were again required to wait in the heat and without shelter up to 5 hours in our case as the buses could only collect us in single file at the end of the day.

Surely something better can be organised. There appeared to be no special arrangements for the movement of some 700 buses or special facilities for them.

3.2 – Part B concerns the conduct of recent road construction works

Although I have not had any access to any documentation and a two day visit cannot be considered a fair review it was apparent to us that the works had not been undertaken in a manner that we would consider environmentally sensitive or culturally responsible.

3.2.1 - It appears that no specific measures have been undertaken to control erosion or deposition.

It is standard practise in Australia that newly exposed and unstable earth should be protected from erosion or sedimentation by storm events during construction by the erection of appropriate barriers. I did not observe any protective barriers in place.

At the time of my observation I considered a number of areas threatened by erosion. In the event of a storm and uncontrolled runoff occurring serious erosion of the hillside with loss of vegetation would have occurred and the resulting sediments would have had serious detrimental impacts on the beach and marine ecology.

3.2.2. - There was no evidence of efforts to revegetate or rehabilitate cut or fill slopes.

Given the sensitive nature of the unique “Marquis” vegetation community typical of the Peninsular and the National Park an appropriate vegetation rehabilitation plan and should have been a minimum condition for the construction.

3.2.3. The “Sense of Place” has been greatly altered by the change in the contours and the gradients of the hillside.

A significant part of the “Sense of Place” that the Australian community has for the Gallipoli battle is the appearance of the beach and the hillside above it. Among the most common stories about the battle are how the soldiers landed on the beach, how they were overlooked by the Turkish emplacements and the lack of cover and how they struggled up the hillsides.

The sense of place that this lore has generated has been lost by the benching of the road into the hillside and the changes to the topography and gradients of the hillside

In the design of the road there appears to be no attempt to maintain the original gradients or to create a natural appearance through contouring of slopes and spill lines. In places, fill has been allowed to spill right down to the beach and waterline.

3.2.4. A number of temporary structures and facilities were located in previously vegetated and or ecologically sensitive areas.

Construction materials have been stockpiled in vegetated areas and no effort appears made to rehabilitate these areas.

Media and some tour company facilities were placed or forced to locate due to lack of management direction in vegetated area.

It was observed that these facilities were located on roadside areas doing considerable damage to the existing vegetation. It is assumed that they were not required to undertake any restoration works.

3.2.5. Some permanent parking and traffic management areas have been placed in the most prominent locations rather than areas with less visual impact.

The road upgrade included a parking and set down area that is visually prominent above the beach and had substandard lighting fixtures that are likely to be rapidly vandalised.

Design and construction of this area is inappropriate, ugly and significantly substandard.

3.2.6. General Conclusion

To the best of my knowledge the road and constructions have been planned and undertaken in a manner routine for Turkish "standards and controls".

However, these local standards have significantly altered the visual appearance of the coastal environment which is so fundamentally important to understanding and appreciating the conditions and environment under which the ANZAC troop fought. The sense of exposure, the lines of sight, the hillside grades and the distances have been fundamentally altered at several key points along the Cove and adjacent areas. The beach appearance today must be nothing like what the troops saw when they stepped ashore.

Members of my tour group who had made previous trips to the area say the Cove and hillsides have been greatly altered by the construction.

Given, that the Anzac Cove site is probably the most important cultural site outside the country to our Nation it seemed self evident that standards and controls should have been incorporated into the roads design and construction appropriate to its significance even though the Turkish authorities may not have required them.

3.3. Part C concerns the Management of the National Park and wider region.

The wider area of the Peninsular incorporating the ANZAC battlefield is now the Gelibolu National Park. The ecology of the Park area has been greatly modified by thousands of years of human activity including agriculture and grazing. However the area still supports a highly significant Mediterranean ecological community called a "Marquis Coastal Woodland". This is a fire dependent ecological community not dissimilar to the West Australian "Kwondong" or the Sydney Sandstone region.

Since the establishment of the National Park and the removal of much of the historic human activity the natural ecological process have acted to re-establish a globally important ecological landscape unique in the Aegean area.

Ironically, this means the ecology of the area is in fact very different today compared to 90 years ago.

This means that there could be very different management priorities for the heritage and natural values of the site. These need to be carefully and professionally investigated and a balanced management plan prepared.

I visited a number of significant heritage and natural areas during my tour of Turkey and believe the current management of the Gallipoli area is fairly typical for the country as a whole. It would appear that Turkish government lack the experience, policies and resources to manage the park as world "best practise".

It was interesting to see the very different management approach taken by the Turkish authorities compared to our approach.

It seemed to me that in Turkey natural and heritage features are taken more for their "entertainment" value and therefore managed for the tourist benefit as prime concern. In Australia we tend to place a greater emphasis on conservation values and management is designed to "protect the feature from the tourist".

It is my observation that visitor numbers, both on ANZAC Day and throughout the year have reached a point that the park is suffering real and permanent damage.

I did not see any evidence of track or trail management outside the main war memorials. There was only a small number of rudimentary directional signs and no interpretive signage that I saw outside the memorials.

There was no management of hikers or trekkers or off road vehicles who were allowed to walk all over the area with significant potential to damage important ecology, increase erosion and fire hazard and damage archaeological sites

Our War Graves Commission may have done a good job of maintaining the war memorials and cemeteries but they appear to lack the expertise and charter to be involved in the broader issues of environmental, heritage and tourist management of the park area.

4.0 Conclusion

It is our belief that:-

1. The planning, design and construction of the road works was greatly inadequate and has caused real damage to the heritage, archaeological and ecological values of the area.
2. That the Commonwealth War Graves Commission is an inappropriate body to manage the wide range of issues that the ANZAC site represents.
3. That a new management authority is needed specifically for the Gallipoli Peninsular. There should be better co-operation with the Turkish authorities which have sovereignty and responsibility for the management of the area. This should include better liaison with Turkish authorities, education and exchange of relevant expert officials in the areas of heritage, ecological and archaeological research, policy development and management.
4. That the Australian Government has an obligation to make realistic and generous financial contribution to the management of the Gallipoli Peninsular.
45. That the Australian Government seek to prepare in conjunction with Turkish and New Zealand Govts a world best practise Plan of Management to cover the Heritage, Archaeological, Ecological and Tourism values of the Gallipoli Peninsular.
6. We believe it is in both Australian and Turkish interests to spread the tourist impacts over the whole of the year rather than just a single event.

It is outside the scope of this submission to recommend the form of the management authority except to note that it should be a multi-govt body representing the Turkish, Australian and New Zealand Governments, and it should have a commission that encompasses the management of the specific heritage, archaeological, ecological and tourism values of the site. Further that it should have members with expertise in all these disciplines.

Finally we would like to offer to meet with the committee in order to provide additional information, answer questions on this submission and provide additional photographic material.

For and on behalf of

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5.0 Photolog of significant features of the report.

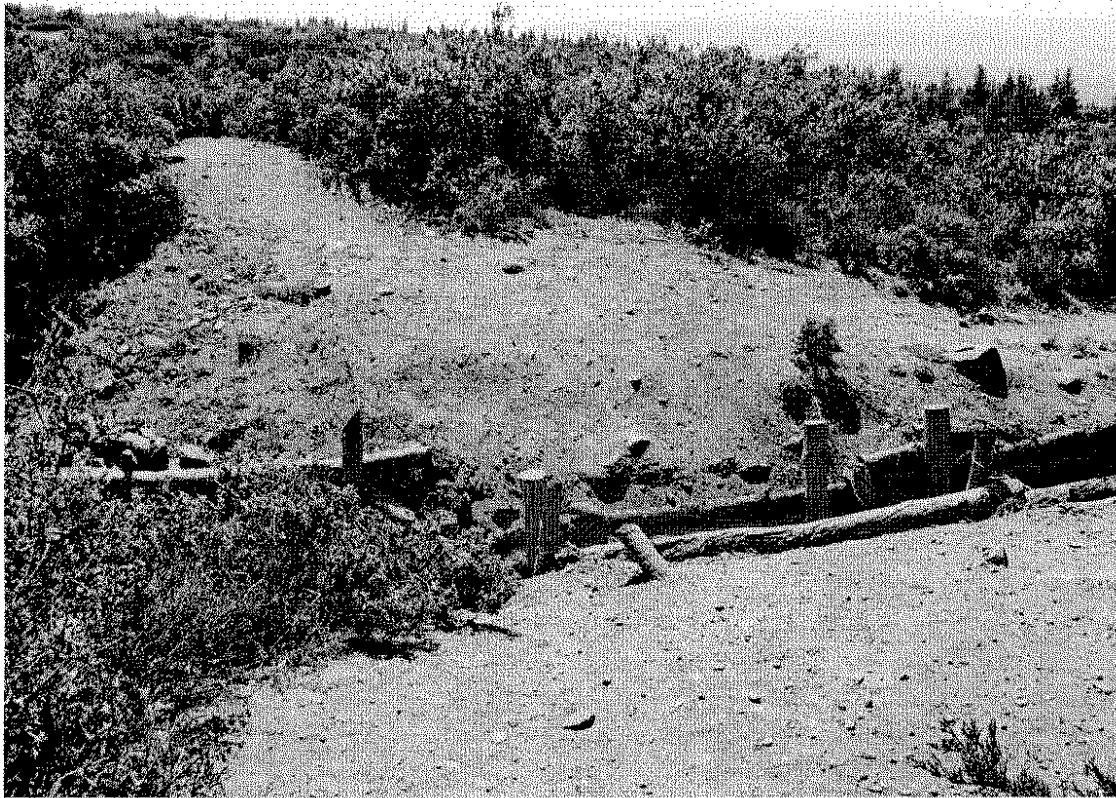
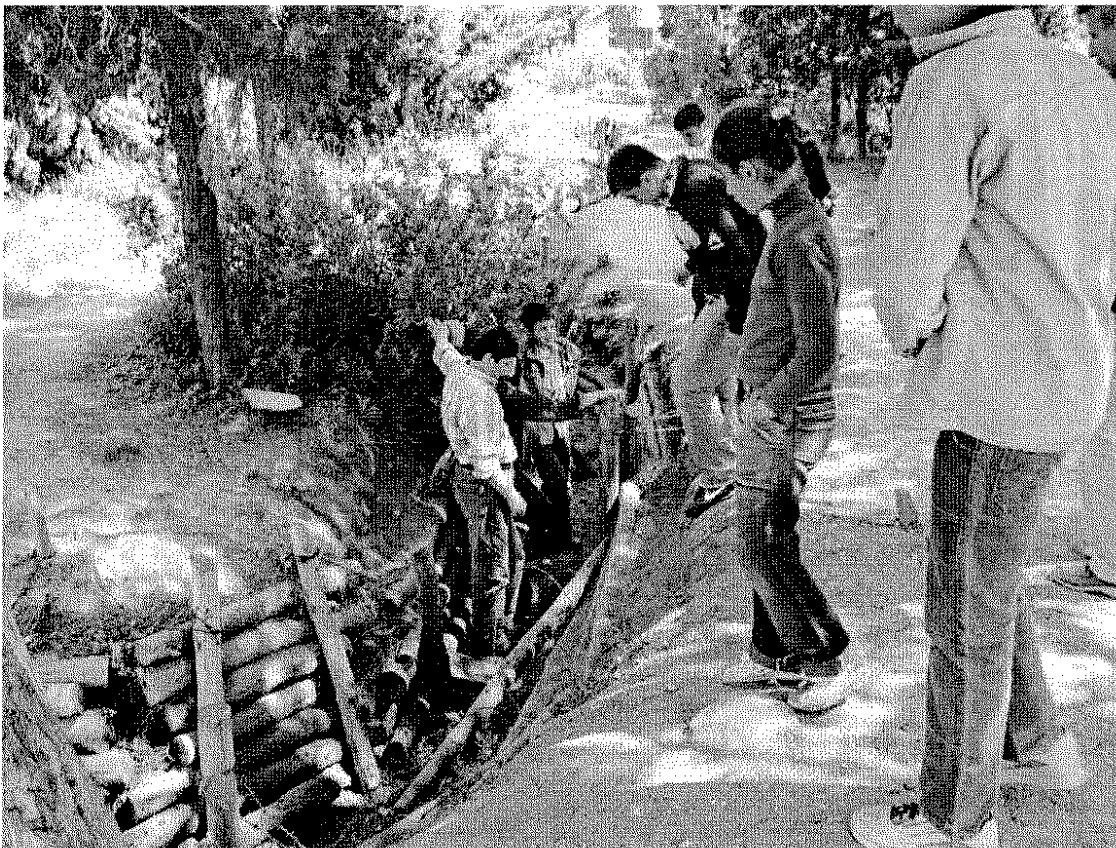


Fig 1 and 2 - I am not sure if the remaining trenches are reconstructions or original but people have access to them and doing significant damage. Best practise conservation standards would protect them from the tourist.



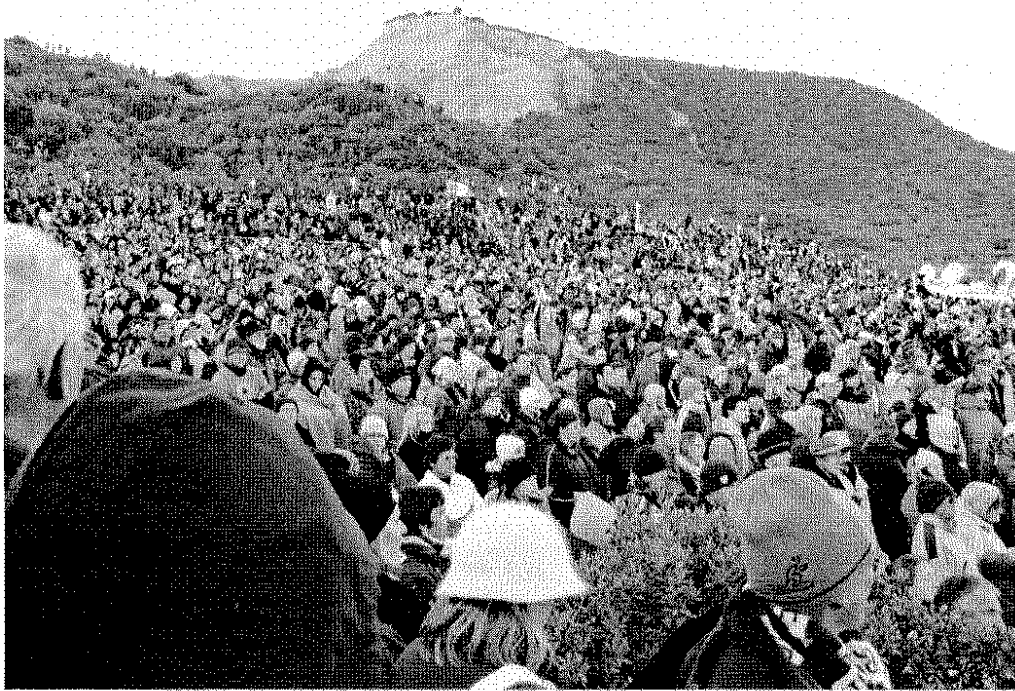


Fig 3 and 4 - The crowd greatly exceed the available seating capacity and requests to “clear the path” for VIP’s was met with appropriate derision.

Despite this the crowd and my group were appreciative of the ceremonies and were greatly emotionally affected.





Fig 5 - Road construction adjacent to ANZAC Cove has greatly altered the foreshore line and the "sense of place"

It appears to have been undertaken without the most basic of environmental controls such as sedimentation and erosion management or any revegetation planning.

The archaeological values of the site have been hopelessly corrupted.

I assume the construction was undertaken without any sort of environmental or heritage impact study and therefore no alternative works considered.

I believe this event has exposed the inadequate management of the area under the current regime. A new management authority and system needs to be implemented.



Fig 6 - Standards of signage and maintenance of trails is rudimentary and substandard. There is a complete lack of interpretive information and points .



Fig 7 – Areas adjacent to the Dawn service were used for informal walks, storage and parking and were damaging the vegetation.