



Mr Alistair Sands
Committee Secretary
Inquiry into matters relating to the Gallipoli Peninsula

Dear Mr Sands,

I realise that at this stage of proceedings it is probably too late to provide the Committee with additional material but I am submitting the following in response to recent developments that have occurred here in Turkey and that have received coverage in the Australian media. As it might pertain to the deliberations of the committee I have taken the liberty of putting forward this brief submission.

As has been referred to in the media, the Turkish Culture and Tourism Ministry has been considering a plan to develop a number of scenic viewing areas for visitors at a number of sites at high points on the battlefields of the Gallipoli Peninsula. These would be accompanied by parking areas for vehicles.

The sites that have been discussed include Mal Tepe to the east of the ANZAC sector, Alci Tepe in the southern Cape Helles sector, Tekke Tepe at the edge of the Suvla sector, Chunuk Bair near the New Zealand national monument, Hill Q to the south of Chunuk Bair and the Nek and near the Sphinx in the ANZAC sector.

While the first three proposed sites are on the fringe of the battlefields and would cause only minimal damage to the heritage of the region, any construction at Chunuk Bair, Hill Q, the Nek or near the Sphinx would be carried out over terrain that was fought over by Allied forces.

Of particular concern to Australians would be any construction at the Nek and near the Sphinx, as both areas are behind the frontline trenches in the area, were fought over during the first day of the land campaign and are of particular significance to Australians. Both are also within the area laid out in the 1923 Treaty of Lausanne as being granted by the Turkish government in perpetuity to the Allied powers.

The information that I have received on the proposed developments comes from two different sources, both of them Turkish. While I am not at liberty to make their names public, I have been authorised to say that both had been consulted by the private Turkish company that has been asked to draft the proposal for the construction of these scenic viewing areas.

Both strongly advised against any such construction taking place at either the Nek or in the area of the Sphinx due to concerns over damage to the heritage of the sites.

I have also been informed that the committee comprising historians and experts on the campaign to the Gallipoli Historical National Park established to provide advice on such matters also recommended against any construction at either site. This information came directly from one of the committee members.

However, as this proposed work is to be conducted on behalf of the Culture and Tourism Ministry, not the National Parks Authority, I have been told that any construction would not be covered by the Park's regulations. Nor is there any obligation by either the Park authorities or the Culture and Tourism Ministry to abide by the recommendations of the Park's committee of experts.

According to both the persons I have discussed this matter with, the company asked to draft up the proposal for the construction at the various sites is Nik Insaat Ticaret Ltd Sti, based in Istanbul. As I understand, this company has also conducted work on behalf of the Australian government on the Peninsula.

As I have said when these matters were raised by the Australian media, these planned developments are still in the proposal stage. This might explain why, according to a statement by Mr Mark Sullivan of the Department of Veterans' Affairs, that Australian authorities had not been notified of any such proposals, despite the agreement between the Turkish Australian Prime Ministers that any such developments be discussed jointly.

I hope that the committee will consider taking this information into account when discussing recent developments on the Gallipoli battlefields.

Should the committee have any queries regarding this submission, I would be only too happy to try and answer them.

Yours sincerely,

Bill Sellars
Eceabat
Turkey
16 August 2005