

War Memorial upgrade won't come at veterans' expense: PM



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Aug 10, 2020 – 1.28pm

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Prime Minister Scott Morrison says not a single cent of funds intended to support veterans' mental health will be lost to a massive upgrade to the Australian War Memorial.

The scale of a nearly \$500 million redevelopment of the historic Canberra institution has attracted criticism, including from veterans' advocates who say the money should instead be used for ongoing support of men and women who fought for Australia overseas.

Announcing a decision to recommend World War II sailor Edward "Teddy" Sheean receive a posthumous Victoria Cross, Mr Morrison said the redevelopment was a "tremendous project".

Mr Morrison announced the decision alongside former War Memorial director Brendan Nelson, a leading advocate for the redevelopment. Dr Nelson chaired a review of honours recommendations for Mr Sheean.

"I think it honours all of those who have served Australia and will serve Australia and particularly those who have served Australia in more recent conflicts," Mr Morrison said.

"We do need to tell all the stories of Australia's service. And there needs to be room and space and appropriate facilities there to recognise and reflect that."

On Monday, *The Australian Financial Review* reported Dr Nelson had hit back at critics of the redevelopment, accusing opponents of being "disingenuous" and motivated by resentment.

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— Scott Morrison

Mr Morrison said the works would be the most significant improvement to the War Memorial since it was opened.

"Not one cent will be spent on that memorial that would otherwise be spent on support for veterans," he said.

"The best memorial we can provide to our veterans is to ensure they are well supported with their daily struggles and that's certainly what we are seeking to do."

Dr Nelson, now chairman of Boeing Australia, and Seven West Media boss and memorial chairman Kerry Stokes are championing the upgrade, set to increase the memorial's footprint by 80 per cent.

Heritage advocates, historians, former public servants and some veterans' groups believe the scale of the upgrade, and changes to the building's appearance, risk damaging its revered status.

As federal Parliament's public works committee considers the designs and heritage impact, Dr Nelson said some former memorial staff were bitter at the circumstances of their departures and resentful of subsequent changes.

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