

Heritage Guardians

Former Director of Australian War Memorial says \$498m extensions proposal duplicates Memorial's Mitchell buildings: letter to Prime Minister

The accompanying letter was signed by Brendon Kelson to the Prime Minister on 19 June. Mr Kelson was Director of the War Memorial from 1990 to 1994.

Mr Kelson says the proposal to extend the Memorial's Campbell building 'would be an unwarranted and indulgent duplication of the [Memorial's] Mitchell development already underway and an extravagant use of astronomically expensive space'.

'The Government should drop the Australian War Memorial expansion', Mr Kelson continues, 'and support the cost-effective and practical Mitchell alternative to meet the quality storage, conservation, maintenance and exhibition demands of the Memorial's large objects collection'.

Released along with Mr Kelson's letter is [a detailed article](#) by a former Registrar of the Memorial, Richard Llewellyn. Mr Llewellyn's article points to deep flaws in the process to date regarding the proposed extensions. Among other things, the Prime Minister announced funding of \$498m for the project before the Memorial provided the Detailed Business Case (cost confidence at 80 per cent) to the government. This seems to flout Department of Finance rules.

Mr Llewellyn also argues that the proposed two level Anzac Hall is an extremely poor idea, fraught with difficulties regarding point loadings, access and drainage.

Mr Llewellyn is doing further work in this area, with a particular focus on the relative costs of the Mitchell precinct and the proposed Campbell extensions, given that they potentially display similar military aircraft and other equipment.

Senate Estimates, the Public Works Committee, and heritage and National Capital Authority consultations will provide opportunities to test the arguments of the proponents of the Memorial extensions.

Contact: Dr David Stephens for Heritage Guardians, 0413 867 972

Further information

[Supporting material can be found on the Honest History website](#) on behalf of the Heritage Guardians group. Note especially the following:

[Article published in *Pearls and Irritations* blog by Professor Peter Stanley](#), UNSW Canberra. Argues that the Australian War Memorial Act says nothing about the Memorial being a ‘therapeutic milieu’, providing healing to veterans, despite the ambitions of Memorial Director Nelson in this direction.

[Article published in *Pearls and Irritations* blog by Dr Charlotte Palmer](#), discussing the appropriate treatment for PTSD.

[Article published in *Nine* newspapers by Dr Margaret Beavis](#), arguing that the ‘therapeutic milieu’ justification for the Memorial extensions trivialises the nature and treatment of PTSD.

[Petition against the Memorial project, signed by 1236 Australians](#) (14 April entry). Signatures available on request.

[Summary of petition comments.](#)

[Open letter signed by 83 distinguished Australians against the War Memorial project.](#)

Heritage Guardians: coordinating community action on the War Memorial extensions

‘[It should] ... not be colossal in scale but rather a gem of its kind’ (Charles Bean and the Australian War Museum Committee, 11 October 1923, on the proposed building and collection)