

Heritage Guardians

Australian War Memorial's own documents reveal conflicting arguments for expansion funding – and massive discrepancy in costs

Expert analysis has revealed some disturbing aspects of the Australian War Memorial's proposed \$498m extensions. [The analysis by former senior officer at the Memorial, Richard Llewellyn](#), uses documents produced by and referring to the Memorial. It focusses sharply on the Memorial's attitude to its extensive – and growing – premises at Mitchell, and how this attitude fits with the Memorial's arguments for the extensions at Campbell.

'When arguing for funding for the Campbell expansion', says Heritage Guardians spokesperson Dr David Stephens, 'the Memorial dismisses out of hand the option of making greater use of its Mitchell campus'.

'In 2017 the Memorial promoted Mitchell to the Public Works Committee "as an integral component of the Australian War Memorial and home to a significant national collection" while virtually simultaneously arguing – in the context of the Campbell project – that further developing Mitchell "would result in the Memorial at Campbell not being considered as Australia's 'national' War Memorial, thereby lessening the importance of the Campbell site and commemorations told within".'

The paper considers comparative costs for the recently completed new space at Mitchell and the proposed new space at Campbell.

'It looks as if space at Campbell will cost *around 14 times as much per square metre* as space at Mitchell', Dr Stephens says. 'Yet much of the space at Campbell will be used for the same purposes as the space at Mitchell – to park large pieces of retired military kit, like fighter jets and helicopters.'

The paper also addresses the suggestion that the extensions at Campbell will provide a 'therapeutic milieu' for living veterans of recent wars. Responsibility for therapy lies with Veterans' Affairs and Defence; it is not the Memorial's responsibility under its legislation. Indeed, respected medical opinion suggests providing such a milieu at the Memorial may be inappropriate medically. Some observers have even argued that the therapeutic milieu idea is simply a smokescreen for the construction of large spaces to house military equipment.

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

[Supporting material can be found on the Honest History website.](#)

21 July 2019

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)