

Brief comments on Australian War Memorial Draft Heritage Management Plan

The Memorial has prepared an updated Heritage Management Plan under the EPBC Act. This management plan (the Plan) will update and replace all previous management plans prepared for the Memorial.

The author of these comments welcomes the opportunity to provide brief comments, while noting that the Plan takes very little account of the major expansion program proposed for the Memorial. If it is really the case that [‘the heritage plan was separate to the redevelopment’](#) (as the Memorial spokesperson has said) one wonders what is the point of such a plan, other than as a box-ticking exercise. Plans *are* about the future and tend to involve redevelopment.

Comments on revised assessments

Commonwealth Heritage Criteria

Criterion A (page 52): In its reference to ‘the Australian experience of war and its enduring impact on Australian society’ [the Memorial continues to narrow its mission from what is contained in its Act.](#)

[T]here is [in the Memorial’s Corporate Plan] a “mission” clause in which the ambit is not ‘Australian military history’ as defined in the Act but the narrower field of ‘the Australian experience of war and its enduring impact on Australian society’. (The history of wars in which Australians have been involved on one “side” is clearly a broader canvas than the Australian experience of those wars.)

Criterion F (page 55): The revised assessment rightly gives prominence to Anzac Hall. It is curious, to say the least, that this assessment, in which the Memorial presumably played a drafting or vetting role, apparently did not sway the Memorial from its plans to demolish Anzac Hall. This point was highlighted in [Katie Burgess’s excellent commentary in the Canberra Times.](#)

National Heritage Assessment

Criterion B (page 57): It is good that the opportunity has been taken to revise the hyperbole described in the ‘Commentary’ section.

Other comments

Visitation (page 78): Taken as a proportion of Australia’s resident population, [visitation to the Memorial has not greatly increased over recent decades.](#) Although the analysis at the link relates only to the years 1990-91 to 2015-16, it should make readers wary of the use of visitation statistics. Honest History said this in 2016:

[T]he claim of an increase in real visitors [to the Memorial in 2015-16] – “visitors walking through the front doors” – is not supportable by the Memorial’s own statistics and suggests at least sloppiness, if not an intention to mislead.

Redevelopment projects (page 81): This gives a cursory outline of current plans, although it persists with a carpark north of Treloar Avenue, an option which has been dropped by the Memorial, despite [being confidently promoted at Estimates in February](#) (page 153). This

again raises the question of whether the left and right hands at the Memorial have liaised sufficiently.

The brevity of this section – roughly half a page – is incongruous, particularly in a document which is ostensibly a ‘plan’, that is, it refers to the future. The section outlines in seven bullet points what may well be the future history of the Memorial, compared with the reams of material elsewhere in the Plan (e.g. pp 8-49) on the past history of the place.

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[Heritage Guardians campaign diary](#)