

Mateship, patriotism on show in controversial War Memorial rebuild



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May 9, 2021 – 10.00pm

Values of mateship, patriotism and chivalry will be prominently highlighted during [the controversial redevelopment of the Australian War Memorial](#), planning documents reveal.

As Canberra's National Capital Authority considers nearly 600 new public submissions about [the \\$500 million redevelopment and expansion plan](#), heritage campaigners and the Australian Institute of Architects say demolition of the award-winning Anzac Hall should be rejected and the nine-year project scaled back.



The redevelopment project is expected to take nine years and cost nearly \$500 million. **Australian War Memorial**

Special construction fencing will be erected around parts of the memorial site, including a six-metre-high fence during works at the front entrance. They are expected to remain in place until September 2023.

Banners promoting values including curiosity and comradeship, as well as mateship, patriotism and chivalry, will be used to shield construction areas around the memorial. More than 25 established trees outside the building's southern entrance are set to be removed.

Submissions to the authority – charged with protecting Canberra’s significance as the national capital – closed last week. The current consultation is considering the first stage of the project.

Chief executive Sally Barnes said she believed it was the largest number of submissions ever received in a public consultation process. A report is expected before the end of next month.

Parliament’s public works committee and Environment Minister Sussan Ley have signed off on the project, [strongly backed by Prime Minister Scott Morrison and War Memorial chairman Kerry Stokes](#).

The project is designed to modernise and expand the memorial, allowing for better commemoration of recent conflicts, including Afghanistan and Iraq.

Australian Institute of Architects national policy manager Kate Hurford said the organisation remained “dismayed” by plans to demolish Anzac Hall, opened in 2001. The building won the Sir Zelman Cowen Award for Public Architecture in 2005.

“We are equally concerned about the consequences for other icons if the [memorial], a preeminent national institution, is permitted to disregard its heritage obligations by the NCA,” Ms Hurford said.

“The strength and value of Australia’s legislated environmental and heritage protections and the guardianship of the National Capital Plan that rests with the NCA will be undermined if such a blatant violation of the Heritage Management Plan for such an iconic site were permitted to proceed.”

Medical Association for Prevention of War president Sue Wareham told the consultation the current application should be categorically rejected.

“Anything less than this would be a sheer travesty, for which the NCA would rightly be characterised as nothing more than an unprincipled rubber stamp.”

Stewart Mitchell, the former head of buildings and services at the memorial, told *The Australian Financial Review* the level of public and professional criticism was greater than anything he’d seen in 20 years.

“There is clearly something very wrong, at many levels, for this flawed proposal to have progressed so far,” he said. “If it goes ahead in its current form it will be a scandalous example of the failure of heritage legislation to protect this most important site”.

Campaigner and Heritage Guardians convener David Stephens said the latest public consultation had shown significant opposition to the project in the community.

“The \$500 million would be far better spent on direct benefits to veterans and their families and on Canberra’s other struggling cultural institutions,” he said.

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