

# *Heritage* Guardians

## *Equity for our cultural institutions*

### Some slices of salami are thicker than others: being played for mugs

#### Introduction

This note is to assist analysis of [the current early works approval application from the War Memorial to the National Capital Authority \(NCA\)](#). The works covered include the demolition of Anzac Hall, a massive excavation at the front of the Memorial, and removal of dozens of trees.

‘Salami slicing’ is a rorting or gaming of an approvals process, where the approving authority is encouraged to approve ‘early works’ of such importance that it will be impossible for the approving authority (in this case, the NCA) not to approve later components of the project when applications for those components are made. Indeed, the early works approvals in such cases make no sense unless it is assumed that later approvals will follow.

#### Precedent

There has already been salami slicing in the \$498m War Memorial project. When the NCA considered an early works application from the Memorial for carparking, [it approved the application](#) on the basis that the carparking was ‘the first of the permanent works forming part of the broader redevelopment project’ but was, at the same time ‘an independent structure, **not physically connected to the larger redevelopment project** and is therefore able to be considered as a separate project’ (emphasis added).

**These components are physically connected to the larger project; indeed, they are fundamental to it**

Leaving aside the semantic gymnastics in the NCA’s carparking decision, it is simply impossible to see Anzac Hall demolition, the excavation, and the tree removal, as ‘not physically connected to the larger development project’. In fact, all three components are fundamental to the project as a whole:

- Anzac Hall has to be demolished to enable the construction of a new, two level Anzac Hall, a central component of the whole project (Main Works Package 3 in [the Planning Report lodged with the application](#)).
- The excavation around the Southern Entrance to the Memorial is essential to allow construction of a new entrance and reconstruction of the Parade Ground, both key components of the project (Main Works Package 1).
- The removal of at least 65 (probably up to 100) trees is essential to allow construction of a new entrance and reconstruction of the Parade Ground, and extension of the CEW Bean Building (Main Works Package 2), all key components of the project.

## The Memorial's justifications for salami slicing

Responding to Heritage Guardians' criticism earlier this year, a senior War Memorial officer gave these justifications for what we called salami slicing, but what the officer called 'separating early and main works packages':

- de-risks the main works contract by mitigating time, cost and scope risks for e.g., rock encountered during excavation, unexpected levels of soil contamination or services relocations;
- allows more flexible contract terms that avoid excessive delay charges or scope-change costs;
- creates opportunities for a broader range of contractors to be involved in the project;
- allows the project to commence while work is still being done on finer details of design or finishes for individual elements.

## The Memorial's justifications are not credible

These justifications might apply to small preliminary works but cannot apply to fundamental works like Anzac Hall demolition, the southern excavation, and wholesale destruction of trees. The contrast is evident from this list of works covered by the early works application (page 6 of the Planning Report): installation of project perimeter hoardings; services capping and relocations; new timber workshop entry door and path into the existing Bean Building; **demolition of Anzac Hall**; new roundabout to Poppy's Carpark entry road; civil works, earth retention system and **bulk excavation** (emphasis added).

The incongruity of the bolded items in that list is obvious: it is the destruction of an award-winning building less than 20 years old, and costing \$20m in today's dollars, alongside the erection of a fence; it is the excavation of hundreds of square metres of historic earth alongside knocking up a new door and pathway. The NCA – and Australians – are played for mugs by arguments like this.

## The National Capital Plan does not provide an excuse

At page 6 of the Planning Report we are told, 'guidelines in the National Capital Plan (NCP) do not relate to the works proposed under this application'. If that is indeed the case, it suggests there is a deficiency in the NCP, one that allows fundamental components of a project – like the Anzac Hall demolition, the southern excavation, and the tree massacre – to be sneaked through as early works. The NCP deficiency should be remedied forthwith.

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