

***Heritage* Guardians**

Equity for our cultural institutions

Submission to Australian War Memorial on Memorial redevelopment
30 July 2020

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1. This response is in three parts, dealing with:
 - some false premises of the Memorial’s case for the expansion project, both in the heritage documentation under the Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation (EPBC) Act and in general
 - heritage impacts of the project that the Memorial’s heritage documentation underplays or glosses over, and
 - overblown claims and flawed methodology in the Memorial’s consultation with the public.

False premises: not caught in the Act

‘Equitable basis’ is a made-up term

2. [Paragraph 3.1 of the Memorial’s Preliminary Documentation Submission](#) says this:

The Memorial’s Council considers that the Memorial currently does not adequately tell the stories of those servicemen and servicewomen who have served Australia in more recent conflicts and operations ***on an equitable basis as required by the Australian War Memorial Act 1980***. (Emphasis added.)

3. People familiar with the Memorial’s Act were surprised by the claim that it said anything about equitable treatment of cohorts of servicemen and servicewomen. Questioned by Heritage Guardians, the Memorial came up with a lengthy emailed justification about how it has ‘interpreted the Act’.
4. In Heritage Guardians’ view, however, the justification for ‘equitable basis’ is not in the Memorial’s Act but in [its Corporate Plan 2019-23](#), not legislation of the Parliament like the Act, but a glossy document signed off by the then Director, Dr Brendan Nelson. The Plan at page 6, under the heading ‘Strategic Vision 2019-39’, says,

Through this redevelopment the Memorial will record and tell the stories of the more than 100,000 Australians who have served on peacekeeping operations in East Timor, Afghanistan, and Iraq, and on humanitarian operations, ensuring their service is commemorated ***just as is the service of the National Collection***. (Emphasis added.)

5. While the words are garbled, the bolded section at the end of that quote sounds rather like ‘equitable basis’: recent service is to be recognised ‘just as’ is the service of Australians in earlier wars recorded in the Memorial’s collection.
6. Having committed to the redevelopment project, the Memorial wrote appropriate words into its Corporate Plan. The ‘just as’ words were new in the 2019-23 plan but [the 2018-19 Plan](#) (again signed off by the then Director) had been similar: ‘[the Memorial] will seek to engage contemporary and younger veterans and ensure their stories are recorded and told in the same manner as those who served before them’ (page 11).
7. So, to claim that ‘equitable basis’ is required by the Memorial’s Act is simply wrong. ‘Equitable basis’ is an artefact of the Memorial’s corporate planning process. If the Memorial wants ‘equitable basis’ to be in its Act, it should persuade the responsible Minister and the Parliament to make this happen. This careless, perhaps even dishonest, claim at the very beginning of the Memorial’s heritage documentation throws a shadow over the whole 600 plus pages of material.

[Paying respect does not depend on space](#)

8. How then does the Memorial’s documentation make the case for ‘equitable basis’? In [the Attachments to its submission](#), the Memorial offers just *one page* ([Attachment D](#)) of ‘examples of lack of capacity to recognise all conflict and operations’. There is *barely a page* in [the submission proper \(paras 3.2-3.5\)](#) on ‘[t]he need for the project’. That page includes the suggestion that overcoming ‘a perception that the service of some veterans is more important than the service of others’ depends on gaining more space. The Memorial also claims that ‘with the lack of gallery space there is no opportunity to respectfully and equitably describe the broader context of war’.
9. Equating respect with space is, of course, nonsense. It would be better evidence of respect if the Memorial were to make hard decisions about the allocation of its *existing* space to the various wars and warlike operations – and peacekeeping operations – that Australia has been involved in, rather than clamouring for *more* space. If the result of such decision-making privileged recent military involvements compared with, say, the Boer War of 1899-1902 or the New South Wales contingent to the Sudan in 1885, few Australians today would quibble.

10. All cultural institutions in Australia and the rest of the world must make hard decisions about which small proportions of their total holdings can be on display at any one time. Why should the Memorial be any different? Heritage Guardians is not against recognition of service in recent wars and peacekeeping. It just believes that recognition should be provided within the Memorial's existing space. (See also [paras 5-10 of Heritage Guardians' submission No. 40 to the Public Works Committee \(PWC\) inquiry.](#))

'Therapeutic milieu'

11. The Memorial's claims about the therapeutic powers of its exhibitions have always been heavy on emotion and light on evidence. See, for example, the testimonials [on the Memorial's website and in its on-site 'pop-up' exhibition](#) and the many public statements by the former and current Directors of the Memorial. ([An example](#) from former Director Nelson. See also: Director Anderson's evidence to the PWC hearing, 14 July 2020, Draft Hansard, pages 31 and 37.)

12. [Heritage Guardians' submission No. 40 to the PWC \(paras 11-14\)](#) rebuts the claims that the Memorial can provide a 'therapeutic milieu', healing and validation for servicemen and women. Dr Charlotte Palmer, a retired GP with 25 years' experience in treating psychological trauma, looked thoroughly at potentially relevant literature and [drew this conclusion](#):

PTSD and Moral Injury are complex and profoundly disruptive to the lives of sufferers and their families ... Any well-founded therapeutic input is welcome, but glib and selective accounts or affecting anecdotes from individuals – [like those found in the Memorial's promotional material](#) – are insufficient to justify the claim that an expanded Memorial, replete with retired military machinery, will provide a therapeutic milieu.

'The Anzac cloak'

13. Ultimately, the Memorial's case for the project relies not on claims about healing but on what [historian Peter Cochrane called 'the Anzac cloak'](#): 'Drape "Anzac" over an argument and, like a magic cloak, the argument is sacrosanct'. The Anzac cloak means that normal standards of public accountability do not apply; the Memorial benefits from special treatment and the perception that it is a sacred institution.

14. This alleged special status was clear from [a statement by then Director Nelson in April 2018](#):

Whatever the cost [of the Memorial project], as one man said to me: “We’ve already paid. We’ve paid in blood, and whatever the government spends on the Australian War Memorial ... **will never be enough**”. (Emphasis added.)

15. In similar vein was [Prime Minister Morrison’s speech in November 2018 to launch the project](#) where he said, ‘The funding will allow the Memorial to implement these plans **and not be limited in its ambition**’. (Emphasis added.) Those two remarks supporting open-ended funding are triumphs of hyperbole but must be anathema to anyone who believes in sound public administration and a fair distribution of money between institutions.

16. Opponents of the Memorial project have been seen – wrongly – as un-Australian or anti-Anzac. Some of the former Director’s characterisations of the opponents were as inaccurate as they were silly. ([An example](#).) Heritage Guardians can identify with the comment of the CEO of the Australian Institute of Architects, Julia Cambage, in recent testimony to the PWC (Draft Hansard, page 19):

Disappointingly, representatives of the memorial have sought to belittle and misrepresent [the Institute’s] concerns. They have disingenuously and quite offensively sought to cast the institute [sic] opposition of the proposed expansion as a failure to support measures to better honour Australian service men and women who served in modern conflicts and operations.

17. Heritage Guardians does not object to some Australians regarding the Memorial as sacred. Other Australians need not see it that way. Irrespective of how the Memorial is seen, however, public money spent on it should be treated with the same rigour – and with the same basis in evidence – as money spent elsewhere by government.

Underplayed and glossed over: heritage impacts:

Design choice and the destruction of Anzac Hall

18. [The Memorial’s submission at sections 4.3-4.4](#) summarises the design choice process up to the point that Option 1, including the destruction of Anzac Hall, went forward to further development. [Heritage Guardians’ detailed 2019 study](#) (prepared by former senior officer

at the Memorial, Richard Llewellyn) of Memorial documents made available under FOI came to these conclusions about the process:

Examination of the [Memorial's] *Options Assessment Report* suggests that remarkably little reliable evidence was gathered during the Report's preparation. In fact, the Report can be read as nothing more than a detailed (though loosely accurate) statement of a predetermined position requiring "validation" through a consultant's report. In other words, the answer was written before the questions were asked ...

The *Options Assessment Report* refers to "metrics" used for assessing options but only includes one metric (apart from some references to distances). Other so-called metrics are actually objectives or goals or aims ...

In assessing the degree to which options meet objectives the Memorial's consultants [in the absence of metrics] used a subjective measure to determine success against another subjective measure.

Assessment against technical standards is largely missing from the *Options Assessment Report*, but emotive, evidence-free putdowns of non-preferred options are common.

Expenditure of the magnitude suggested should be supported by a robust and reliable presentation of the reasons for it, not just simple statements of belief ...

The preferred option (Option 1) of replacing Anzac Hall with a two-level structure (of which one level would be substantially if not completely underground) is an extremely poor idea. It is costly, cumbersome and fraught with unnecessary risk factors to do with the heaviness of Large Technology Objects, difficulties in manoeuvring them, the need for multiple access points, drainage, and other factors.

19. So, a deeply flawed decision process led to an outcome including the destruction of Anzac Hall. Heritage Guardians notes that [its submission No. 40 to the PWC \(pages 2-3\)](#) included questions relating to this process and that the PWC agreed to put these questions to the Memorial. Heritage Guardians looks forward to the Memorial's response.

20. Meanwhile, the Memorial's Heritage Impact Assessment, prepared in June 2020 by Harold Abrahams Architects, says this ([Attachment C to submission, page 57](#)) about the destruction of Anzac Hall: 'The loss of the existing ANZAC Hall is a sole significant loss of value ... The demolition of ANZAC Hall has a substantial negative impact on the heritage significance of the place.'
21. Heritage Guardians agrees with this assessment and supports submitters to this process, particularly the Australian Institute of Architects, who oppose the destruction of Anzac Hall and who see that destruction as incompatible with the project proceeding in its current form. Heritage Guardians endorses the view of [former Memorial Director, Major General Steve Gower \(Ret'd\)](#) that '[t]he decision [to destroy Anzac Hall] is a prize example of philistine vandalism masquerading as progress'.
22. Moreover, as noted above, the proposed two-level replacement Anzac Hall will have problematic design features both internally (point loadings, access and drainage) and in relation to the rest of the building. (See also: [Richard Llewellyn's 2019 analysis for Heritage Guardians, paras 91-100.](#)) Future managers of and visitors to the Memorial may well bear the consequences of this foolish decision.

Front façade allegedly 'unchanged'

23. The Memorial persists in claiming that the south-facing façade of the Memorial will be unchanged by the project. ([An example.](#)) This is despite the evidence of its own illustrations in the heritage documentation, which clearly show the extent of change.





24. The extended description of the work at [paras 7.2.1-7.2.7 of the Memorial's submission](#) also gives the lie to claims of lack of change. There is enough change to involve (in the words of the submission under a heading 'Impacts upon significant fabric, spatial relationships and views affected and steps to mitigate') removal and reinstatement of original fabric at entrance, change to the visitor arrival experience, structural risk from subterranean connection, glass lift access to access New Southern Entrance, oculus inserted into Main Building forecourt, and Parliament House Vista from the south.

25. In view of the above, it is very difficult to agree with the summary conclusion of the Heritage Impact Statement that the changes in this area of the Memorial have 'a generally positive impact' on heritage values ([Attachment C to the Memorial's submission, page 57.](#)) The Statement recognises 'some negative impact arising from the protruding oculus on the land axis, and the treatment of the introduced terrace wall with slots and freestanding stair'. Heritage Guardians believes this understates the impact of these changes.

26. Distinguished architect, Roger Pegrum, said this to the PWC (Draft Hansard, page 10) about the plans for the front of the building:

I just draw the attention of the proponents and the committee to the fact that you are dealing with a potentially fragile load-bearing brick building, and digging an underground entrance into it is not something that can be done quickly or without considerable care ...

If built as drawn, it is an irreversible and complete change to the appearance of the memorial. For a number of reasons, including those that could be labelled as heritage reasons, it should not, I believe, be allowed to proceed.

27. To sum up, the new southern entrance and façade, including the oculus, will change the sense of arrival to the Memorial, alter the front view of the original building, remove forecourt stairs and plinths, produce risks to structural integrity, set up uncertain relationships between the new entrance and the rest of the building, and involve engineering challenges.

What happened to the *Heritage Management Plan*?

28. [The Memorial's submission proper](#) hardly refers to [the Memorial's Heritage Management Plan \(HMP\) of 2011](#), let alone the withdrawn draft HMP of 2019 (see below para 32), yet para 1.4.3 of the submission mentions the Plan as one of the key documents that the Memorial refers to when making changes to its site.

29. The Memorial's Heritage Impact Assessment ([Attachment C to the submission](#)) goes through the policies in the Plan, marking most of them 'Complies', with a few 'Partly complies' and a couple 'Does not comply', relating to Anzac Hall.

30. A key finding, against 'Policy 1.11 Conserve, manage and interpret the Anzac Hall as a part of the AWM main building', reads 'The proposal includes the demolition of ANZAC Hall and therefore does not conserve it. Does not comply [with the Policy] (page 53).' If heritage management plans are to be more than an empty concept that finding alone should be decisive and bring the Memorial project to a halt. 'Demolishing Anzac Hall would breach the War Memorial's own heritage management plan', said Julia Cambage of the Australian Institute of Architects to the PWC (Draft Hansard, page 19).

31. The planned destruction of Anzac Hall directly contradicts the status of the Hall in the 2011 HMP. That Plan describes Anzac Hall as 'architecturally impressive' (page 13) and it is listed among features of the Memorial that 'act as reminders of important events and people in Australia's history' (page 35). The 2011 Plan continues to be the relevant plan for the purposes of DAWE assessment.

32. The Memorial put out a revised Heritage Management Plan for consultation in 2019, including words on Anzac Hall identical to those in the 2011 plan, but the revision was

withdrawn from circulation and does not now appear on the Memorial's website. [Katie Burgess in the Canberra Times](#) pointed to the discrepancy between the words in the draft Plan and the Memorial's plans for Anzac Hall.

33. Heritage Guardians support the heritage arguments put by [the Australian Institute of Architects](#). The AIA said it had 'significant and ongoing concerns about the redevelopment project regarding the planned demolition of Anzac Hall and threats to the heritage value of the site, including the nationally significant Eastern Precinct Development'. The Institute's consultant, Ashley Built Heritage, said the overall project 'has significant heritage impacts arising from the bulk, scale and location of the new work such that further detail and minor modification would not remove that significant impact'. Architect Roger Pegrum told the PWC (Draft Hansard, page 9), 'The demolition of Anzac Hall and construction of new exhibitions as proposed, hard up against the memorial, is not clever; it's not the answer and it should not be approved'. Heritage Guardians agrees with him.

Overblown claims and dodgy methodology: consultation process

Where did the consultation caravan stop and how were questions asked?

34. The Memorial's statements about consultation, including those made recently by the Director and other Memorial staff to the PWC (as shown in the Draft Hansard of the PWC hearing on 14 July), consistently reveal a credibility gap between claim and evidence. The following examples support this statement.
35. The Memorial made a great show of consultation over eight weeks in August-September 2018, analysed the results thoroughly, then took them off its website [after Honest History pointed out that only 134 people had responded](#), despite an extensive promotion campaign of 'dedicated website content, social media content, email address [sic], stakeholder forums, drop-in information sessions, pop-up events within the Memorial and a digital scrapbook to capture feedback'. The results reappeared in November 2019, buried in [the Memorial's first EPBC heritage referral](#). Heritage Guardians, by contrast, early in 2019 [gathered 1236 signatures in two weeks on a petition against the project](#). The AIA [has more than 1200 signatures on its petition against the demolition of Anzac Hall](#).
36. Then there was the Memorial's consultation undertaken in late 2019 and 2020. This consultation was done in four formats: 'face to face presentations and [community drop

in] sessions facilitated by Memorial staff at one of 46 locations [sic] across the country; written correspondence received through a dedicated email address (development@awm.gov.au) and a demographically representative online survey' ([Attachment S1 to the Memorial's submission, page 5](#)).

37. Oddly, the Memorial lumps these four consultation methods together to give a total respondent figure of 1031, even though the type of input for or against derived from, say, a drop-in session would be rather different in form and quality from that derived from an 'online survey'. Is support derived from a quick visit to a drop-in session worth as much as that contained in a considered letter to the Memorial. How is that support to be weighted against opposition expressed by a letter? It is not good statistical practice to combine data from diverse consultation formats, in this case, mixing quantitative data from the 'online survey' with qualitative data from the other formats.
38. The Memorial's presentation of an overall 'supportive' number of 76 per cent ([Attachment S1, page 7](#)) glosses over the fact that 32 out of the 55 pieces of correspondence the Memorial received, or 58 per cent, were *against* the project. Such slippery treatment of numbers does not instil confidence in the study overall.
39. Those heavy numbers in support are, moreover, so much against other evidence of community feeling that it is necessary to question them. [In a Canberra Times poll in June 2019](#), for example, 80 per cent of respondents were in favour of a statement by former Memorial Director, Brendon Kelson, that the project should not proceed. By Heritage Guardians' count, letter-writers to the editor of the *Canberra Times* on the subject have also been more than 80 per cent against, as have [submissions to the PWC inquiry](#).
40. Further, both the two petitions referred to in para 35 above, with nation-wide and international signatories, gathered more support – over 1200 each – than the Memorial's consultation efforts during November 2019 to February 2020. [The Heritage Guardians open letter in March 2019](#) (83 signatories) and [the Heritage Guardians submission No. 15 to the PWC](#) (82 names) saw many distinguished Australians from all over the country express views against the project.

41. One reason for the Memorial's strange figures could be found in where the consultation took place, where the Memorial consultation caravan stopped. The Memorial has a table of 'EPBC Consultation Events' at page 121 of [Attachment S1](#). The table shows:
- 21 *locations* at 22 *venues* in metropolitan cities and suburbs and regional cities saw 46 *events*, either presentations or drop-in sessions (elsewhere, there is a reference to 46 locations – see above, para 36)
 - 32 of the events, or 70 per cent, were held in RSL or other ex-military clubs or at the War Memorial or the Shrine of Remembrance in Melbourne
 - the average attendance at the 46 events was just ten people, with the highest attendance 38 and the lowest just one person (at a presentation at the Wagga Wagga RSL on 5 December).
42. It is not surprising that events held at such heavily 'military' venues produced favourable responses to the project. The Memorial, at [Attachment S1 to its submission, page 5](#), tries to conceal the heavy representation of RSL and ex-service clubs: 'Events were conducted in a variety of locations including at the Memorial as well as museums, libraries, town halls, and clubs'. The attendance may have been skewed also by advice put out (according to reports received by Heritage Guardians) by some venues to potential attendees that the events were 'invitation only'.
43. It is also worth noting in passing that the Memorial Director and two other Memorial officers told the PWC recently that the Memorial team had visited '42 locations' or '42 places' (PWC Draft Hansard, pages 31, 35 and 40.) The Memorial's own statistic – 21 locations – gives the lie to these careless claims.
44. Then, one could look at the characteristics of those who took part in the four forms of consultation. 'The Memorial notes', we are told at page 7 of [Attachment S1 to its submission](#), 'that the participants at presentations or CDI sessions and written correspondents were mainly reflective of those already interested in or involved with the Memorial such as veterans or defence family members'.
45. There is more below on the 'online survey', which the Memorial claims (again at page 7 of [Attachment S1](#)), 'was designed to, and does, represent a broader cross section of the Australian community' – broader, that is, than the representation in the other formats

such as RSL clubs. Careful to find this broader cross-section, the Memorial has no qualms, however, about lumping together results from the four disparate formats to come up with 'General sentiment' ([Attachment S1, page 7](#)): data from the 'representative' online survey is combined with data from face-to-face events, even though the Memorial admits that participation at these events was skewed towards older people and was disproportionately male ([Attachment S1, pages 32-33](#)).

46. Finally, there is the way the project was promoted at the presentations and drop-in sessions (462 attendees in total). At page 90 and following of [Attachment S1 to the Memorial's submission](#) is 'EPBC Presentation, December 2019'. It is a glossy and slick presentation of dot points and architect's illustrations. The servicemen and women pictured are glowing with health and airbrushing. There is no mention of costs, of the destruction of Anzac Hall, of opposition. How could anyone say no to such a project? It is surprising that just under a quarter of those attending and witnessing this sales pitch resisted it and remained opposed to the project or wanted more information. Perhaps they asked questions about what the presentations glossed over.

Not a 'survey' at all

47. We turn now to the Memorial's 'online survey', reported at page 74 and following of [Attachment S1 to the Memorial's submission](#). The Memorial's contractors, [Faster Horses](#), ('We combine art and science to find meaning in patterns, that others don't see') described how they weighted the data to ensure they had a nationally representative sample. The contractors paid attention to location, age and gender but apparently not to cultural and linguistic diversity. This is a glaring omission in the Australia of 2020.

48. Despite the exercise being described by the Memorial development project's Executive Director [at Estimates](#) (page 148) and before the PWC (Draft Hansard, page 40) as a 'survey', it was not a survey in any real sense, that is, an honest canvassing of opinions. Instead, it sought 'feedback' to carefully constructed leading questions. 'The primary aim of this research', says the report at page 77 of [Attachment S1](#), 'was to assess how the Australian public feels about the proposed developments to the Australian War Memorial (AWM), and whether this development aligns with the AWM's Social Values'.

49. For example, respondents were asked to read this sentence: ‘The time has come to modernise and expand the Australian War Memorial’s galleries and buildings so it can tell the continuing story of Australia’s involvement in modern conflicts’. They were then shown some attractive images of the project. There was nothing about the cost, nothing about the opposition to the project or the arguments against it, nothing about other options.
50. Then followed a brief description of the elements of the project and this concluding sentence: ‘Sensitively connected to the existing landscape, the detailed plans will ensure the heritage façade remains unchanged’. (On that last debatable point, see above paras 23-26.) Given that just 21 per cent of the sample had heard of the Memorial project ([Attachment S1 to the Memorial’s submission, page 79](#)), it would have been easy for these prompted messages to take hold. Forty-two per cent of respondents admitted to having little or no knowledge about the AWM’s role and functions ([Attachment S1, page 81](#)). Respondents like this would have been especially susceptible to Faster Horses laden with glowing descriptions of the Memorial’s plans.
51. Another question gave respondents a description of how the Memorial contributes to Australian social values at present and then asked them whether the Memorial would still deliver on those values once the proposed development was complete. ‘After learning about the planned development, the level of total agreement that the AWM will deliver social heritage values increased slightly from 78% to 83% (page 84).’
52. Questions like those that Faster Horses pitched are bound to lead to favourable responses, and these questions did just that for three-quarters of those providing feedback. The phrase, ‘They would say that, wouldn’t they?’ comes to mind. Particularly if, as noted above, a large proportion of those surveyed had no pre-existing knowledge.
53. The Memorial Director’s testimony to the PWC shows the leading question habit persists there and, interestingly, delivers the same level of support:
- Then the question [put to visitors to the Memorial] is, “Do you agree with the need to more fully tell the stories of modern conflicts, peacekeeping and humanitarian operations?” Eighty-six per cent of people said yes. Eighty-one per cent strongly

agreed or agreed that the development will deliver improved social heritage values for the memorial. (Draft Hansard, page 39.)

Conclusion: striking a balance

54. The Memorial has always been, and is meant to be, at once a memorial, a museum, and an archive. Different visitors will look for different elements. Heritage Guardians' concern is to maintain an appropriate *balance* between these three functions. The Memorial's redevelopment project does not do that.

55. A greatly extended Memorial, full of retired military machinery – 'toys for the boys' and effectively advertisements for the manufacturers, some of the world's biggest and most profitable defence companies – will be irrevocably more of a military museum than a memorial. The balance will have shifted.

Visitors would walk [said Dr Sue Wareham of Medical Association for Prevention of War to the PWC (Draft Hansard, page 23)] amidst decommissioned military hardware, an experience which is clearly intended to inspire awe and fascination at the technology itself. This would tend to dwarf and marginalise the human element: the very people whose deaths we are commemorating.

56. Memorial Council Chair, Kerry Stokes, told the PWC (Draft Hansard, page 36) that the Memorial's promotional 'fly-throughs' of the new space showing these machines are just notional, and final decisions about what is displayed are up to the curators. This claim must be treated sceptically, given [the listing of military machinery in the Memorial's PWC submission \(para 2.6.3\)](#) ('It is important that these objects are part of a conflict or operation gallery where they are a key element of the story', the Memorial argued) and statements by the former Director, such as [the one that a retired F-111 would have 'pride of place' in the expanded Memorial.](#)

57. Why take on these planes, helicopters, armoured vehicles and what-not from the Department of Defence if they are not to be displayed? They are tourist attractions as well as combat relics and the Memorial is immensely proud of its tourist visitor numbers (even if it [sometimes has manipulated the figures](#)). And the more of these machines that find their way into the Memorial, the greater the risk of the place becoming something other than what it has been since it was opened in 1941.