

HONEST HISTORY

Heritage Guardians
Equity for our cultural institutions

The Hon. Dr Jim Chalmers MP
Treasurer
Parliament House
CANBERRA ACT 2600

Senator the Hon. Katy Gallagher
Minister for Finance
Parliament House
CANBERRA ACT 2600

Dear Treasurer
Dear Minister

Congratulations on your appointments. I am writing to you in connection with your joint role to review government expenditure prior to the Budget later in the year.

You will be aware of the commitment by the former government of \$498 million to build extensions to the Australian War Memorial. This project is well under way, notably with the demolition of Anzac Hall, the destruction of dozens of trees, and the excavation of large holes. According to the Director of the Memorial, [quoted in yesterday's Canberra Times](#), the project costs have already blown out \$50 million beyond the original figure, and there are strong hints that further cost increases are to be expected. While the Director admits this amount of \$50 million came from the then government in March this year, [Budget papers for the past two years](#) show there have been increased capital injections to the Memorial *totalling \$308 million*.

I am writing to you as editor of [the Honest History website](#) (nine years arguing that Australia is more than Anzac and always has been) and on behalf of [the Heritage Guardians group](#), which campaigned against the Memorial extensions project. We do not believe – despite the demolitions and excavations – it is too late to change the project's direction. I urge you to:

- cap expenditure on the War Memorial project – that is, to make no further capital injections to the Memorial nor any other subventions that might go towards the project;
- closely investigate where savings might be made on the project, up to and including scrapping some or all proposed new construction;

- require the Memorial to account, publicly and annually, separate from the Budget process, for how the amount of (now) \$548 million is being spent.

Only through such accountability can the Memorial live within its means and Australians, opponents and supporters of the project alike, be satisfied that the Memorial can continue to be an institution worthy of those whose names are inscribed on its Roll of Honour.

In view of the importance of this matter, I have copied this letter to the Prime Minister and the Minister for Veterans' Affairs.

Yours faithfully

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "David Stephens".

(Dr) David Stephens
Editor, Honest History website; on behalf of Heritage Guardians

2 July 2022