Letters: War Memorial - no harm intended to heritage

Aug 27, 2020 – 12.00am

I write in response to Tom McIlroy's article, "Architects say War Memorial rebuild will harm heritage" (August 23), which refers to an open letter penned by a former national president of the Australian Institute of Architects, Clare Cousins.

I am surprised by Ms Cousins' claims to represent the views of the membership of the Australian Institute of Architects as a whole. Five leading architects (Cox Architecture, Scott Carver, Lyons Architecture, Guida Moseley Brown Architects, and DJAS Architecture) who are AIA members are involved in the development project.

The memorial arrived at the proposed designs over a three-year period. Careful attention was paid at every stage to ensure the design would protect the heritage value of the original building. Four of Australia's leading firms in public building architecture were selected to develop competition entries for additional gallery space to the north of the main building.

Four concept designs – one of which retained an expanded Anzac Hall – were presented to a jury of three highly regarded architects and two senior memorial staff. The design by Cox Architects – which included replacing Anzac Hall – was chosen as the solution to best meet the memorial's needs for the next 50 years.

A similar design competition was held for the southern entrance, and Scott Carver's entry was selected.

Although our plans aim to greatly increase the space available to tell the stories of 100,000 Australian veterans who have served during the past three decades, the change to our existing footprint is designed to be substantially less than the 80 per cent suggested.

Council and staff have a deep respect for the Australian War Memorial, and preserving and sharing Australia's military history. We are among its greatest supporters and protectors.

Matt Anderson
Director of the Australian War Memorial