

Anzac Hall – Candlelit Rally

On Sunday, 20 June 2021, more than 100 supporters amassed at dusk on a freezing cold Canberra evening to pay tribute to one of Australia's finest pieces of public architecture, Anzac Hall.

The future of the Sir Zelman Cowen Award-winning exhibition hall is bleak after the National Capital Authority granted approval for the Australian War Memorial's 'early works', which involves the demolition of Anzac Hall and the removal of over 100 historic trees on site.

The rally was a powerful expression of the community's grief at the waste of great architecture. However, there was also a palpable sense of anger at the failure of democracy and proper process. Time and again over the last three years, decision-makers have run roughshod over expert advice as well as public opposition to the redevelopment proposal in its current form.

ACT Chapter President and National President-Elect Shannon Battisson, [read out this statement](#) from architects Denton Corker Marshall:

In October 2018, the announcement by the Australian War Memorial (AWM) to demolish Anzac Hall came as a shock.

Designed by Denton Corker Marshall some 20 years ago, ANZAC Hall was conceived as an integral part of a composition with Emil Sodersten's original memorial building. ANZAC Hall's siting, symmetrical arrangement and light connection to the War Memorial are deferential to its historic counterpart. Together they form an integrated ensemble.

The 1941 building is heritage listed.

The 2001 ANZAC Hall extension won the highest award for public architecture in Australia, the Sir Zelman Cowen Award.

This recognition forms part of Australia's contemporary architectural heritage.

Denton Corker Marshall believes the AWM is first and foremost a solemn memorial, and only after that a war museum.

We would like to thank the Australian Institute of Architects for establishing the 'Hands off Anzac Hall' campaign, and the members of the public, especial those who contributed to the record 598 submissions to the NCA that opposed the redevelopment.

Federal Greens Senator, Jordan Steele-John, attended and gave an impassioned speech against the further glorification of war, comments echoed by Dr Sue Wareham, President of the Medical Association for Prevention of War (Australia), and the inadequate recognition of the Frontier Wars.

Professor Peter Stanley reflected the clear community sentiment saying that the Memorial needed to remain a place of quiet contemplation and remembrance, not a place to show off military hardware.

The Institute's advocacy efforts in defence of the value of architecture, the importance of heritage and the need to follow due process on this issue will continue.

Shannon gave interviews with Radio 2CC and the Canberra Times ([read the full story here](#))

National President, Tony Giannone, spoke at length to ABC Radio National's Jonathan Green about how we can't afford to allow a culture of disposable buildings to emerge in the face of a climate crisis and preserving Australia's contemporary architectural heritage ([listen here](#))

Former National President and #HandsOffAnzaHall campaign spokesperson Clare Cousins spoke to Architecture & Design about how the failed approval processes for this project create a precedent that endangers "every other piece of public architecture in this country" ([listen here](#))

This work is elevating the voice and values of the architectural profession. Social media alone regarding the rally has reached more than 30,000 people, on top of the hundreds of thousands of Australians reached through the mainstream coverage.

The fight to save Anzac Hall isn't over yet and we will not give up on defending the principles and values our members' work enshrines.

21 June 2021

Australian Institute of Architects