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Plans to demolish Anzac Hall submitted as War Memorial redevelopment waits for final approval



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Local News

The Australian War Memorial Picture: Karleen Minney
Plans to demolish Anzac Hall as part of a \$500 million Australian War Memorial redevelopment have been submitted for approval as part of early works in the project.

The application to demolish Anzac Hall, remove scores of trees and complete other initial works on the redevelopment were submitted to the National Capital Authority on March 12.

The project was given the green light by Environment Minister Sussan Ley in December, under the *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act*.

However, it still has a final hurdle to pass with approval from the National Capital Authority yet to be given.

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The authority has already approved earlier preparatory work for the redevelopment, including new car parking, asbestos removal and temporary structures for display and offices on site.

The current application for "early works" includes the removal of more than 60 trees surrounding the parade ground and at the main entrance.

It also includes a new roundabout to Poppy's Cafe carpark.

The expansion will create a larger facility to host the memorial's collection. The memorial has said it intends to include more on recent conflicts, including those in Afghanistan, Iraq and Syria.

But the popular Anzac Hall, built in 2001, will need to be demolished in order to make way for the extended display.

Opponents to the redevelopment have called out the inclusion of the Anzac Hall demolition in this proposal as making the authority's consideration of the rest of the project "redundant".

Heritage Guardians convener David Stephens said as the demolition of the hall was key to the project, allowing it before a final decision was made would be "casting the die irrevocably".

"This is an important thing, it will affect the whole look of the Memorial for the next 50 years," he said.

"Don't rush it through."

The expansion has been strongly opposed by heritage groups and historians who say it would have social and physical impacts on the site.

According to the documents, the new entrance would include a 250-person theatre and improve "visitor orientation".

Two new stairwells will be constructed either side of the stairs in the lower level of the main building.

A new Anzac Hall would be built at the same location as the current building but would double the area for public display, adding about 4000 square metres.

A new link is planned to "make use of the high-value space between the rear of the main building and new Anzac Hall."

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The Parade Ground would also be ripped up as part of the early works. The ground will remain but be reshaped so the splayed sides will sit parallel with Anzac Parade, for military formations and events.

The Bean Building will be extended and a new research centre constructed to allow "operational and non-critical administration" work to be moved from the main building.

The expansion will add 7500 square metres.

The application is open for feedback until April 30.