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War memorial council should heed objections

On August 27, Matt Anderson, the Australian War Memorial director, commented on an open letter from the Australian Institute of Architects, which was critical of memorial development plans on heritage grounds and the destruction of Anzac Hall ([“War Memorial – no harm intended to heritage”](#)).

Mr Anderson believes his proposal is an exemplar architectural project that hits all the right buttons on design and heritage (“Careful attention was paid at every stage to ensure the design would protect the heritage value of the original building”). Why, then, is it not yet approved under government heritage legislation because of its likely impact on heritage?

Why has the AWM ignored the requirements of its own Heritage Management Plan, not least of all that Anzac Hall should be retained?

Mr Anderson signs off with a comforting “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.” One would hope so. However, Mr Anderson, Australians are all to some degree supporters and protectors of the memorial and many of us think you’ve got the design wrong.

The memorial is one of the most important sites in the country. Please stop the rhetoric and look into why many are objecting to the proposal. This development must achieve what we all want – the best outcome for veterans, the memorial, and Australian architecture and heritage.

Stewart Mitchell

Former head of buildings and services at the Australian War Memorial