



OFFICE OF THE HON MATT KEOGH MP
MINISTER FOR VETERANS' AFFAIRS
MINISTER FOR DEFENCE PERSONNEL

MC23-001362

Dr David Stephens
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Dear Dr Stephens,

Thank you for your most recent correspondence of 6 July 2023 to the Minister for Veterans' Affairs, the Hon Matt Keogh MP, regarding the Council of the Australian War Memorial. The Minister has asked me to reply on his behalf. I acknowledge your letter dated 20 April 2023 addressed to Minister Keogh and additional correspondence to the Australian War Memorial dating back to 2016.

I understand the Chair of the Council of the Australian War Memorial, the Hon Kim Beazley AO, has offered to meet with you to discuss matters relating to this issue, and that this offer still stands.

Frontier violence has been acknowledged in the Memorial's galleries since at least 1986. The functions and powers of the Australian War Memorial are specified under sections five and six of the *Australian War Memorial Act 1980* (the Act), which provides the authority for Council's decision to present a broader and deeper depiction of frontier wars.

The presentation of frontier conflicts will be told in a respectful and proportionate way in keeping with the mission and purpose of the Memorial. It will be informed by a curatorial team to be established in late 2024, and guided by a number of groups including, as you have noted, an Indigenous and Torres Strait Islander Advisory Group. This advisory group is made up of representatives from diverse communities and language groups.

As part of the expansion of the galleries the Memorial will be reviewing their business operating model. In this context, I would also note that gallery space is not the only mechanism to provide access to the National Collection or archive material and a "broader and deeper" depiction of frontier conflict may be multifaceted.

The Act specifies that appointments and terminations to the Memorial Council are the responsibility of the Governor-General (Sections 10, 14). The Minister does not, in his own right, have the power to appoint or dismiss Council members. Fostering diversity on any Board or Council and having members with differing opinions enables robust and open discussion. These discussions increase knowledge and achieve well-considered outcomes.

Thank you for taking the time to write to the Minister for Veterans' Affairs. I trust this information is of assistance.

Yours sincerely



Catherine Bergin
Chief of Staff

14 September 2023