



Australian
Institute of
Architects

Australian War Memorial Development Project

**Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation
(EPBC) Act 1999 Referral – Second Consultation Stage**

Submission issued

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SUBMISSION BY

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PURPOSE

- This submission is made by the Australian Institute of Architects (the Institute) to provide comments on the Australian War Memorial Development Project.
- At the time of this submission the National President of the Institute is Alice Hampson.
- The Chief Executive Officer is Julia Cabbage.
- The cover feature photo was provided by John Gollings AM (www.gollings.com.au).

INFORMATION

The Australian Institute of Architects (Institute) is the peak body for the architectural profession in Australia. It is an independent, national member organisation representing over 12,500 members across Australia and overseas.

The Institute exists to advance the interests of members, their professional standards and contemporary practice, and expand and advocate the value of architects and architecture to the sustainable growth of our communities, economy and culture.

The Institute actively works to maintain and improve the quality of our built environment by promoting better, responsible and environmental design.

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1. INTRODUCTION

The Australian Institute of Architects (the Institute) is the peak body for the architectural profession in Australia, representing over 12,500 members. The Institute works to improve our built environment by promoting quality, responsible, sustainable design. Architecture influences all aspects of the built environment and brings together the arts, environmental awareness, sciences and technology. By combining creative design with technical knowledge, architects create the physical environment in which people live, which in turn, influences quality of life. Through its members, the Institute plays a major role in shaping Australia's future.

On 1 November 2018, the Australian Government announced the Australian War Memorial (AWM) Development Project with funding of \$498.7 million over a nine-year period commencing in 2019/20. The proposed Development Project includes a new entry into the main building, the southern and eastern extension of the Charles Edwin Woodrow (CEW) Bean Building, the modification of the Parade Ground and the 'removal and replacement of Anzac Hall'. This means that there is significant potential for cumulative impact on the National Heritage values of the site.

The Institute recognises the need and in principal understands that ongoing re-development of the AWM is necessary. However, it is essential that the National and Commonwealth heritage values and solemn purpose and nature of the site as a memorial, rather than as a war museum, are prioritised in all decision-making processes. The Institute therefore welcomes this opportunity to make a second submission in relation to the AWM development referral to the Department of Agriculture, Energy and the Environment (DAEE) under the *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999 (EPBC Act 1999)*.

This submission outlines our significant and ongoing concerns about the project including the planned demolition of Anzac Hall and threats to the heritage value of the site. The demolition of Anzac Hall will result in the loss of a highly contributory component in the Commonwealth Heritage listing for the AWM and contravenes management policy in both the (current) 2011 and (pending) 2019 Heritage Management Plans (HMP).

We would also like to note that our concerns mirror the views of a wide cross-section of the community, not just the architectural profession, stemming from veterans and their families, concerned citizens, distinguished and honoured Australians, leading academics, renowned historians, as well as former memorial directors and staff as evidenced by the ongoing engagement of the Australian community in both the *EPBC Act 1999* referral process and the current inquiry into the proposal being undertaken by the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Public Works.

2. DUE PROCESS CONCERNS

The Institute has enduring concerns about the process undertaken from the inception of the AWM Development Project. These include:

- a Reference Design, that included the demolition of Anzac Hall, as a mandatory requirement in the Expression of Interest (EOI) process, even though three other Preliminary Designs met the same floor space requirements but retained Anzac Hall;
- public consultation for the development project that predominately related to early parts of the functional brief, rather than actual design concepts. It has also not appropriately included professional stakeholders such as the Institute or the Moral Rights holders of Anzac Hall;

- initially, only some parts of the development were under consideration or are being reviewed when all aspects should have been included in the one review process. The heritage impacts from these 'non referred' parts of the development should have been included in the Development Project now being considered; and
- the approval of the 2019 AWM Heritage Management Plan has been delayed, compromising assessment of the heritage impacts of the Development Project on the site. The 2019 HMP should have been approved and made publicly available before assessment of the heritage impacts of the Project were sought from DAEE.

The Institute is extremely disappointed that not only did the Reference Design significantly constrain the usual creative and strategic design processes, it lost the opportunity to creatively explore further options identified in the Preliminary Design stage, which would have supported the retention of Anzac Hall.

As noted, some parts of the Development Project have not been included in the *EPBC Act 1999* Referral or for review by the Public Works Committee and have in fact already been approved by the National Capital Authority (NCA). A Temporary Carpark located east of Poppy's café was approved by the NCA on 23 November 2019 on the basis that it was 'physically separate' to the development although the NCA have acknowledged it was part of the overall Development Project.

At the time the Institute advised the NCA that the Temporary Carpark Project application presumed that the \$498.7 million AWM Development Project would proceed and that Public Works and NCA approval would be granted. It is the view of the Institute that the separate consideration and early approval of the Temporary Carpark Project further prejudiced the proper consideration of future applications forming part of the overall Development Project.

While it may have been technically feasible to apply for and receive approval for these works based on the costs involved, the total AWM Development Project should have been subject to a review process before any approval was given for related parts of the project and the associated expenditure of funds. The combined and cumulative impact on the National Heritage values of the AWM must be considered in detail.

Of further concern to the Institute is that the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Public Works Inquiry is being undertaken at the same time as the project referral to DAEE under the *EPBC Act 1999*, and without an updated and approved HMP in place. The Institute is also extremely concerned that the Public Works Committee will be asked to make a final determination on the Development Project without necessary information on the heritage impacts of the development. This is again exacerbated by other parts of the Development Project being approved and progressed independently and without Public Works Committee oversight or *EPBC Act 1999* Referral.

The Institute also notes that a major variation to the scope of the Development Proposal/ Preliminary Documentation was submitted to DAEE by the AWM following the referral being determined a "controlled action" at the end of 2019. It is likely that the scope and impacts of the expanded project referral will be unable to be fully reviewed and adequately assessed as the scale of the supporting documentation only published in July 2020 means that the public consultation component of the *EPBC Act 1999* assessment process has now been substantially compromised.

This new documentation seriously impacts on the ability of all parties to carefully review the project with more than 600 pages of project documentation newly published, including a completely new heritage impact assessment report. The response times for the second stage consultation are unreasonably short given the scale of this new documentation and the expanded scope of the project now under consideration.

Given the scale of the new documentation and the potential cumulative heritage impacts of the planned development at the AWM, it is the view of the Institute that DAEE should review the processes undertaken to date and consider if it is now more appropriate for the *EPBC Act 1999* referral process to be undertaken via Public Inquiry.

3. PLANNED DEMOLITION OF ANZAC HALL

It is of utmost concern to the Institute and its members that the Memorial has widely and very publicly committed itself to a development plan that includes the demolition of Anzac Hall. Opened in 2001 at a reported cost of \$11.3 million, Anzac Hall has been lauded for its sensitivity to the heritage and cultural context of this national memorial while also providing functional design.

The AWM is included on the Australian Institute of Architect's register of "Nationally Significant 20th-Century Architecture". In 2005, architects Denton Corker Marshall (DCM) won the Institute's prestigious national "Sir Zelman Cowen Award for Public Architecture" and the "Canberra Medallion" for Anzac Hall.

DCM is also an award-winning architectural firm including being recipients of the "Australian Institute of Architects' Gold Medal", the highest honour the Institute can bestow. The award recognises the exceptional body of executed work and outstanding contribution of DCM to the development of the architecture profession and the built environment in Australia.

Our reference to Anzac Hall's award-winning status illustrates its peer-reviewed quality as a piece of master craftsmanship that is exceptionally fit-for-purpose, with many decades, remaining in its useful life. There is also a direct relationship between recognition by groups such as the Institute (and others such as Engineers Australia) for the work of their peers and the eventual recognition of values by the broader community through heritage listing. The AWM heritage listings already acknowledge the contribution of Anzac Hall to the precinct. Given time, it is extremely likely that Anzac Hall would obtain a direct heritage listing in its own right.

The current and pending AWM Heritage Management Plan's (2011 and 2019) also recognise the importance of Anzac Hall to the AWM Campbell precinct and require that Anzac Hall be retained and conserved. At the same time, the Memorial continues to proceed with a Development Project that requires the demolition of Anzac Hall. At only 19 years of age, Anzac Hall is considered young in public building terms, where average lifecycles are 50 to 100 years.

While the Institute and its members fully support the Memorial's purpose in commemorating "the sacrifice of those Australians who have died in war or on operational service and those who have served our nation in times of conflict," we oppose the planned wasteful and unnecessary destruction of Anzac Hall, a building that was painstakingly designed and crafted to honour this service to our nation. Anzac Hall is a building that forms an integral part of the War Memorial site itself, whose sacred and special significance is the sum of all its parts. It is now also a building that holds two decades' worth of precious experiences where countless veterans, families and their visitors have engaged in shared remembrance.

There remains significant and growing concern, not only from the Institute but from other professional bodies and the wider community about the Development Project. No approvals have been given by the National Capital Authority nor the Public Works Committee for the demolition of Anzac Hall. There has been very limited transparency in the decision making process regarding this project and the Institute has seen no evidence that the demolition is required. Nor has there been an appropriate level of community consultation on options that include the retention of Anzac Hall.

4. IMPACT ON THE EASTERN PRECINCT

The Eastern Precinct Development by Johnson Pilton Walker also won the Institute's prestigious Sir Zelman Cowen Award for Public Architecture and the Canberra Medallion in 2011. The effort the Memorial took to develop the Eastern Precinct adjacent to the AWM main building was significant.

The Memorial followed due process under the *EPBC Act 1999*, including review and approval by the Public Works Committee with the result being a HMP and site development plan that worked together with a collaborative and collegiate team to produce an award winning development that had very little impact on the AWM and which is still highly celebrated.

The Eastern Precinct Development integrated a range of landscape and architectural elements within a nationally significant heritage landscape, based on extensive consultation and planning. The result being that the cafe, forecourt and National Service Memorial Courtyard are sensitive in architectural conception, powerful in composition, delicate and precise in construction, refined and exquisite in their simplicity, and delightfully integrated into the immediate and greater landscape. The precinct is an exceptional work of architecture and urban design and something should not be undermined through insufficiently planned future development.

The cumulative impact of all planned development must be considered in detail to ensure that the effort taken to prioritise heritage values, maximise eucalypt retention and minimise vegetation loss during earlier development projects is not lost through insufficient planning and appropriate oversight when undertaking future development. The already approved tree removal and car park development, along with the broader Development Project has the potential to cumulatively impact significantly and negatively on the heritage and architectural value of the entire site.

5. FINAL RECOMMENDATIONS

As noted above the Institute has significant concerns about the process followed in relation to heritage considerations for the \$498.7 million AWM Development Project and the extent to which the entire project has progressed without the relevant heritage approvals in place.

The Institute will continue to voice strong opposition to the development plans. While welcoming efforts to further honour the stories of Australia's servicemen and women, we are at a loss as to why alternatives that allowed for the preservation of Anzac Hall as part of the development plan were not further explored. This is of particular concern, given that the existing and pending heritage management plans for the site require its retention, conservation and interpretation. We are also more broadly concerned that the Development Project threatens the heritage values of the entire site, including the Eastern Precinct Development.

The Memorial has legislative obligations for the protection and conservation of the AWM heritage values for all Australians. It is not apparent that the Memorial has liaised effectively or to the extent required for such a significant project with the Department of Agriculture, Energy and the Environment, National Capital Authority or other identified stakeholders to properly assess the proposal's cumulative impact on the site such as with Australia ICOMOS: International Council on Monuments and Sites.

We appreciate there may be a need to increase the Memorial's capacity, including some expansion, but we oppose doing this in a way that is wasteful, destructive and damaging to the heritage value and integrity of the site. Over development will lead to significant adverse loss of the qualities that make the AWM nationally significant.

The current expansion proposal breaches the War Memorial's own Heritage Management Plans which explicitly require the retention of Anzac Hall. Given time, we are confident that Anzac Hall will achieve status as a heritage listed building in its own right – something the plans to bulldoze it clearly seek to avoid. Allowing legislated heritage protections to be so blatantly disregarded in this instance, and for such a prominent public institution, would set a dangerous precedent for other iconic sites.

As the national institute for architects, we have a remit to seek to preserve Australia's architectural heritage and to promote sustainable development, to conserve energy and resources and minimise waste. Fortunately, many aging buildings are worth saving and deserve longer lives. Their functional and technical obsolescence can be remedied in ways that are financially feasible. They can be successfully remodelled, reconfigured or enlarged and, equally important, repurposed to efficiently meet current and future requirements. It is the Institute's position that significant public buildings that are of cultural, social and environmental value should not be demolished if they have a useful life. Anzac Hall should be preserved for current and future generations. Its demolition is unnecessary and unwarranted.

We know that at least three other Preliminary Designs met the same floor space requirements while also retaining Anzac Hall and that in addition at least one Reference Design also retained Anzac Hall while successfully meeting the remaining conditions of the EOI process. There is absolutely no reason why Anzac Hall cannot be retained, and the aims of the Development Project still be delivered. Demolishing an award winning and culturally significant public building that is only 19 years old should never have been considered appropriate.

The *EPBC Act 1999* referral should also have been completed before the project was considered by the Public Works Committee. It is not right and proper that the Public Works Inquiry is being undertaken at the same time as the project referral to DAEE under the *EPBC Act 1999*, and without an updated and approved HMP in place. It is impossible for the Australian public and members of the Institute to have confidence that the Public Works Committee has the necessary information on the heritage impacts of the development in order to make an informed decision.

The Institute would also like to reaffirm that given the scale of the major variation to the scope of the Development Proposal/Preliminary Documentation as part of the *EPBC Act 1999* process – with more than 600 pages of project documentation newly published, including a completely new heritage impact assessment report – DAEE should reconsider the Preliminary Documentation and redetermine that the *EPBC Act 1999* referral process be undertaken through Public Inquiry.

The AWM is, unquestionably, one of our nation's most valued and important public institutions and while the proposed demolition of Anzac Hall is of extreme concern to the Institute and our members, it is also our belief that the current Development Project, and associated projects that are already underway could, cumulatively lead to the adverse loss of the qualities that make the AWM nationally significant. On behalf of all Australians the *EPBC Act 1999* referral process must be undertaken in a detailed and measured way to ensure that this does not occur.