

Findings and recommendations

Findings

Chapter 1

The significance of the Gallipoli Peninsula

- The significance of the 1915 Allied campaign at Gallipoli in the history of the Australian nation has experienced a resurgence of interest in recent years as a symbol of independence, nationhood, national ethos and identity.
- The significance of Gallipoli is reflected by strongly growing attendances at ANZAC Day ceremonies at ANZAC Cove over the last decade, and by a resurgence of interest and support for commemorative activities.
- In the lead-up to the centenary of the 1915 landing, public interest in Gallipoli is likely to grow.
- The symbolism and importance of Gallipoli has been reflected in extremely strong public reaction to events at Gallipoli early in 2005 both with respect to damaging roadworks, but also the events associated with the ANZAC Day ceremony on 25 April 2005.

Chapter 2

The need for roadworks on the peninsula

- The entire Gallipoli Peninsula, which was the field of battle from 25 April to December 1915, is experiencing significantly increased levels of tourism from both Turkish and Australian and New Zealand citizens.
- The ANZAC Cove sector of Gallipoli, as defined in the 1923 Treaty of Lausanne, is experiencing a similar level of pressure. The site is remote and environmentally sensitive to urban settlement and agriculture, as well as tourism, and access by tourists is relatively uncontrolled.
- The facilities for those attending commemorative activities at the Australian commemorative site adjacent to ANZAC Cove are inadequate. There is insufficient space for attendees on ANZAC Day, poor water supply, and inadequate toilet facilities.
- Foremost among the shortcomings of the Australian site over the last five years has been difficult access by road, insufficient parking space for buses,

- and traffic management arrangements on key ceremonial occasions, including ANZAC Day.
- Roads to the ANZAC site, until recently, have been allowed to fall into serious disrepair, posing risks of public safety and restricted access at times of high demand.
- The Turkish Government, in recognition of its responsibilities and the need to provide better access on the peninsula for visitors of all nationalities, has embarked on a major program of investment in road upgrades.
- The Australian Government, through the agency of the Minister for Veterans' Affairs and the Office of Australian War Graves, and the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, has been active in seeking improvements to all facilities at the Australian commemorative site, including improved road access and parking.
- A key request was made in a letter from the then Australian Minister for Veterans' Affairs, the Hon. Danna Vale, to the Turkish Minister for Environment and Forests, His Excellency Mr Osman Pepe. The letter suggested improved turnaround facilities for coaches at two northern locations on the coastal road. It also recommended an upgrade of the inland road from Lone Pine up to Chunuk Bair, and down along the third ridge to the Kemalyeri Memorial.

Chapter 3

The culpability of the Australian Government in damage caused by the roadworks

- The Committee finds that bone fragments were unearthed by the coastal roadworks, and that the military heritage was damaged permanently—with no convincing evidence to the contrary. Significant sites of the ANZAC campaign between April and December 1915 have been lost forever.
- The Committee finds that the Australian Government has wanted to improve the roads around Gallipoli for a long time. Given this desire, the letter from Minister Vale, and frequent attendance by Australian officials, the Committee finds that the Australian Government is culpable through its own inaction for the damage caused by the recent roadworks.
- The Committee finds that Australian officials did have first-hand knowledge while construction was ongoing that the roadworks were causing damage to the landscape. There was no effort made to investigate allegations that bone fragments had been uncovered, nor to negotiate with Turkish authorities on the extent of the roadworks.

- Concern expressed by Australian and Turkish people at the nature of the work and the risk of archaeological damage, resulted in only a short suspension of work late in February 2005. By then, the damage was done. Work proceeded shortly thereafter.
- The Committee finds that there was no scope for a process of planning and consultation between the Turkish and Australian Governments, prior to the construction work proceeding in late February 2005. There was no systematic oversight of military heritage issues by Australian authorities. Turkey's National Parks Directorate had employed three consultants to undertake a survey of the area. It lasted only 15 minutes and was performed after the excavations.
- The Committee finds that the process for treating uncovered human remains at Gallipoli is unclear.
- The Committee finds that the Australian Government was 'asleep at the wheel' in the months prior to the roadworks commencing in late February 2005. It placed too much faith in the assurances of Turkish officials and the Commonwealth War Graves Commission. It responded almost two months after the damage was done, despite the knowledge of Australian officials that construction was affecting the site.
- Advice to the Australian Government on the damage which occurred in late February 2005, was not properly heeded and prompted no serious intervention until the Prime Minister's visit on 26 April 2005. It was not until then that work was fully suspended by the Government of Turkey.
- The Government, by its failure to safeguard the ANZAC Cove site and its Australian military heritage, defaulted on its responsibility to the Australian people, particularly the expectations of veterans.

Chapter 4

The need for research

- Recognising its accepted status as an international cemetery where over 130,000 people died, Gallipoli has not been adequately surveyed, researched, or catalogued for its military heritage value, nor for the sensitivity of its natural environment, so as to inform current and future management policy.
- The failure to undertake such research has resulted in significant public concern in both Turkey and Australia at the destructive nature of the 2005 roadworks.

- An archaeological survey of the roadworks site was conducted after the event by the Commonwealth War Graves Commission (CWGC), at the request of the Department of Veterans' Affairs. The survey was cursory and inadequate, and the advice provided has been directly contradicted by local people.
- Sole reliance on CWGC advice, rather than direct Australian initiation of an archaeological survey by Australian experts, was a serious error of judgement. The Australian Government must be held accountable for this oversight.
- The significant degradation of the beach and coastal waters at ANZAC Cove could have been avoided had the area been properly researched.
- On 26 April 2005, the Prime Minister of Turkey initiated an assessment of the damage to military and cultural heritage at ANZAC Cove, and to rectify this damage. These research projects should have preceded the roadworks, not followed it.

Heritage issues

- The Government of Turkey should be credited with the declaration of the Gallipoli peninsula as an international peace park, in recognition of its significance as an original WWI battlefield of immense importance to the nations who fought there.
- The Committee find that progress on the Heritage listing of the site on the Australian Register of the National Estate is at a sensitive stage. Since discussions on this issue commenced, there has been a shift from heritage listing under Australian legislation to more symbolic means of recognition.
- Notwithstanding the current assessments being undertaken, much more research needs to be undertaken not just of the immediate ANZAC area, but the entire peninsula. This must be the priority of the Australian Government.
- Future roadworks must be subject to detailed scrutiny to ensure that no damage is done to any military heritage.

Recommendations

Recommendation 1

The Committee strongly recommends remedial action before the onset of winter to stabilise and restore the vegetation at ANZAC Cove. This will ameliorate the scarring caused by the earth works and minimise future erosion.

Recommendation 2

The Committee recommends clearer guidelines for the future management, recovery, reburial or storage of human remains at Gallipoli. The current arrangements are clearly not understood, and their effectiveness is doubtful.

Recommendation 3

The Committee recommends a full military-historical audit of the entire battlefield area at Gallipoli, with Australian priority for the ANZAC area. This survey must be public information and must be continually updated.

Recommendation 4

The Committee recommends that a working group be established by the government to advise it on the coordination of the conservation management planning of the Gallipoli site. This group should include key government departments (including DVA, DEH and OAWG), the Returned Services League, the Australian War Memorial, and historians and archaeologists with specialist knowledge of Gallipoli.

Recommendation 5

The Committee recommends that the activities of this working group are documented in annual reports. These reports should be sent to the proposed parliamentary committee (see recommendation 6).

Recommendation 6

The Committee recommends to the parliament that it establish a joint standing military commemorations committee. This Commemorations Committee will exercise bi-partisan oversight over all commemorative programs, including the management of all sites of Australian military heritage. It is hoped that the establishment of the Committee will remove the risk of political exploitation of commemorative events by the government of the day.

Recommendation 7

The Commemorations Committee should receive quarterly reports from the relevant government agencies on all commemorative activity and planning, including all memorial construction, event preparation, meetings, agendas, outcomes, public education and budgets.

The Commemorations Committee should also receive advice from the working group on all military heritage conservation issues, and develop a rapport with comparable groups in Turkey and New Zealand.

Recommendation 8

The Committee recommends that the Australian Government should maintain a dialogue with the Turkish Government on the symbolic recognition of Gallipoli, with the express objective of a management plan for the protection of Australian military heritage at Gallipoli.

Recommendation 9

The Committee recommends that special arrangements be established whereby discussions and negotiations with the Government of Turkey with respect to the international recognition of Gallipoli should be reported to the new parliamentary standing committee on a quarterly basis.