



Ms Sally Barnes
CEO National Capital Authority
Treasury Building, King Edward Terrace
PARKES ACT 2600

Dear Ms Barnes

ANZAC Parade and the Australian War Memorial developments

I am writing to draw attention to certain implications relevant to the Authority's charter from the proposed major development of the Australian War Memorial site and building.

Presumably the Authority will be involved in approval of any of the developments. I understand that it was brought in late in the process when ANZAC Hall was tacked onto the building. But due the highly politicised and purposeful manner in which that development proposal was managed, the Authority was not provided with a sufficiently strategic perspective in time to properly consider.

This time I am raising the opportunity earlier on so that the Authority is better able to fulfil its charter to preserve the national significance of the ANZAC Parade precinct as whole and to lead a far more circumspect approach for future developments.

When viewed from the air, ANZAC Parade can be seen as having been designed as a great iconic grave, with the War Memorial building standing out as a cross at its head. The symbolism of this great grave-like image in the heart of Canberra is of national significance. It recalls Australian war graves the world over, provides a substrate to the memorials it encompasses, and signifies something that is a deep part of our cultural traditions.

The siting, proportions, the gravel etc all make this iconic intention obvious from the air - though not easily discernible from the ground. Also the distinctive cruciform significance to the precinct of the Memorial building as it was developed 'in the round' has not been adequately considered and documented in heritage studies. Probably it has been passed over in piecemeal/façade studies or in view of secular social and government norms.

Influential people, including decision-makers, politicians, relevant administrators, and more recent AWM site developers have consistently misunderstood and overlooked the iconic nature of the whole precinct when viewed from the air. The Administrative Wing was the first intrusion diminishing the site's iconic significance as outlined above. Then when the 2000 Centenary came around, ANZAC Hall was tacked on to the Memorial building itself (to my mind sacrilegiously and should indeed be removed as part of the next developments).

I consider that if the truly iconic nature of the whole AWM/Anzac Parade precinct was better grasped, then new large exhibition spaces, administration and visitor developments etc would be located by preference on the Constitution Avenue corner near the foot of Anzac Parade, preserving the symbolism of our national icon and also encouraging use and visitation to the precinct as whole. Sites such as Anzac Park West are not being properly used as it is and should be repurposed for this, and not subject to repurposing for incompatible commercial purposes.

I wrote to the AWM about this several months ago but have not yet been favoured with any response or acknowledgement. There is no doubting the strengths and commitment of current Memorial management - but bringing with it inevitable blind spots and overstepping.

Whilst I expect your administration will have been exposed to all the wiles of the current crop of project proponents, I would appreciate advice of the independent NCA line on this matter as now raised.

I also request you bring the matter to the attention of the NCA Board members (and including any near term appointments) in a timely way so that it can be properly considered in the AWM site developments this time around.

Sincerely

Roger FitzGerald

28 June 2019