

## CHAPTER 2

### The need for roadworks and the involvement of Australian authorities

2.1 This chapter recognises that the partially completed roadworks at Brighton Beach, ANZAC Cove and North Beach were urgently needed. It identifies several factors contributing to the decay of the coastal road, including erosion, lack of adequate repair work in the past, and the increased volume of traffic over the past five years. Even critics of the impact of the recent roadworks acknowledge that without major repair work, both the coastal road and the road from Chunuk Bair to Lone Pine posed some threat to public safety.

2.2 The evidence presented to the Committee was unanimous that the roads around Gallipoli Peninsula were in need of repair. The continuing popularity of ANZAC Day commemorations has increased the volume of traffic on these roads, particularly coach traffic from the north of ANZAC Cove. The number of visitors attending the 25 April ceremony at ANZAC Cove has increased from roughly 10,000 people in 2002 and 2003, to an estimated 18,000 in 2004 and 17,000 in 2005.<sup>1</sup> The Committee heard evidence that hundreds of coaches used the roads on and around ANZAC Day.

2.3 The roads on the peninsula are also crumbling from erosion, poor construction and lack of past repair work. The Secretary of the Department of Veterans' Affairs, Mr Mark Sullivan, asserted that Australian authorities often expressed concerns to the Turkish Government that the coastal road was unsafe. The Committee is unaware of any evidence supporting this assertion, until after the event. Mr Sullivan noted the 'professional view that there has been horizontal erosion at ANZAC Cove of approximately 10 metres'. He added, 'my major concern was that buses...were going past each other on a road that was crumbling into the sea'.<sup>2</sup>

2.4 Turkish authorities also appear to have held these concerns. The Committee received a submission from a Turkish-born Australian citizen, Mr Vecihi Basarin, who had spoken to the Turkish authorities responsible for the roadworks. Mr Basarin wrote that the authorities had told him their concerns that one of the buses full of school children or tourists would be involved in a road collapse into the sea.<sup>3</sup>

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1 These figures are drawn from media reports. 'Thousands pay tribute at historic site', *The Age*, 26 April 2002; N. Bitá, '10,000 brave Gallipoli cold', *The Weekend Australian*, 26 April 2003; I. Warden, '18,000 gather in cold to remember ANZACs', *The Canberra Times*, 26 April 2004, p. 1; J. Button, 'In their thousands they came to proclaim, we do remember them', *The Age*, 26 April 2005, p. 1.

2 Mr Mark Sullivan, Secretary, Department of Veterans' Affairs, *Committee Hansard*, 17 June 2005, p. 73.

3 Mr Vecihi Basarin, *Submission 2*, p. 2.

2.5 The Committee heard evidence that the road from Chunuk Bair down to Lone Pine was also in urgent need of repair. Mr Sullivan noted that the road is highly arched, and 'the prospect of something disastrous occurring is very real'.<sup>4</sup> The Director of the Australian Office of War Graves, Air Vice Marshal Gary Beck (retired),<sup>5</sup> also noted the 'very high crown' on the Chunuk Bair to Lone Pine road, which made two-way coach access difficult.

2.6 Mr Beck further claimed that the connecting road from the Kemalyeri Memorial to Chunuk Bair is 'very old narrow bitumen'. In the past, the difficulty of passing parked coaches on this road meant that 'hundreds of coaches were not even getting to Lone Pine or Chunuk Bair for the Service'.<sup>6</sup>

2.7 Mr William Sellars, an Australian writer who has resided on the Gallipoli Peninsula in the town of Eceabat for the past three years, gave evidence to the Committee by teleconference in Turkey. While a prominent critic of the roadworks, he has recognised that both the coastal road and the Chunuk Bair to Lone Pine road were breaking up, and posed safety and environmental concerns. Mr Sellars did note that at one point above ANZAC Cove, there had been 'some collapsing of the road'. However, he claimed this condition was attributed to the collapse of a culvert built by the Turkish state 'many years ago'.<sup>7</sup>

2.8 In terms of the use of the coastal road, Mr Sellars argued that it is not heavily used except the week around ANZAC Day. However, there have been conflicting media reports. On 6 March 2005, *The Age* reported that 'more than 2 million Turks are expected to visit the area this year'.<sup>8</sup> The article quoted Australian tour operator, Bernina Gezici, as saying:

the road wasn't built because of the people coming for ANZAC Day—it was built because more and more Turks are coming to celebrate what was for them a historic victory.<sup>9</sup>

2.9 In his written submission, however, Mr Sellars states that most Turkish tour groups do not visit the coastal strip as 'there is only one Turkish monument in this

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4 M. Sullivan, *Committee Hansard*, p. 70.

5 On 3 August 2005, Air Vice Marshall Gary Beck was effectively dismissed from his position following a decision by the Minister for Veterans' Affairs, the Hon. De-Anne Kelly, to advertise for a new head of the office.

6 Air Vice Marshal Gary Beck (retired), Director, Office of Australian War Graves, Department of Veterans' Affairs, *Committee Hansard*, 17 June 2005, p. 69.

7 Mr William Sellars, *Committee Hansard*, p. 8.

8 N. Khadem and F. Walker, 'Graves, beach lost for wider road to Gallipoli', *Sunday Age*, 6 March 2005, p. 7.

9 *ibid.*

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region'.<sup>10</sup> He added, 'the argument that the road had to be upgraded due to the weight of visitor numbers is not sound'.<sup>11</sup>

2.10 Mr Sellars agreed that construction on the Chunuk Bair to Lone Pine road was 'definitely necessary', but added that 'any widening of the road from its original width would be unnecessary'. In evidence to the Committee, Mr Sellars claimed that widening this road on the scale that was conducted at ANZAC Cove would risk exhuming bones, and the tunnels and trenches still intact from the 1915 campaign.<sup>12</sup>

### **The Australian Government's request for roadworks on the Peninsula**

2.11 Access to the ANZAC site has long been a matter of concern to the Australian Government. Each year, when officials prepare for the ANZAC Day ceremony, discussions on traffic arrangements are held, centring on the adequacy of the existing network, and options for improving access for visitors. Road improvement has long been central to Australian concerns.

2.12 In this context, the letter dated 2 August 2004 from the (then) Australian Minister for Veterans' Affairs, the Hon. Danna Vale MP, to the Turkish Minister for Environment and Forests, His Excellency Mr Osman Pepe, is of particular significance. Minister Vale's letter proposed several 'improvements' to the ANZAC Commemorative Park, given an expected increase in visitor numbers for the 90<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Battle of Canakkale.

2.13 The letter argued that further improvements to access roads were necessary 'to ensure safety of coach passengers':

if Ridge Road past Lone Pine and Chunuk Bair to the Kemalyeri Memorial could be widened, it would enable two-way or passing traffic to flow again and would ease the considerable delays in coach departures after the services.

2.14 The Minister's letter also recommended construction work to be undertaken on the coastal road:

A suitable turnaround facility for coaches, north of the Commonwealth War Graves Commission maintenance area, would be a most useful addition. Such a facility may solve the problem of having visitors walk many kilometres to attend the dawn service. A turnaround facility constructed

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10 *Submission 15*, pp 6–7.

11 *ibid.*

12 *Committee Hansard*, p. 9.

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adjacent to the Ari Burnu Cemetery would similarly prove most useful in resolving traffic congestion with official vehicles.<sup>13</sup>

2.15 The Committee received a submission from environmental consultants Mr Ian Tait and Mr Geoffrey Ostling, which appears to support the proposal of a turn-around facility. Both Mr Tait and Mr Ostling had attended the 25 April 2005 ceremony at ANZAC Cove. The first part of their submission noted:

It appears that the audience was only allowed access from the northern access [road]...We were required to walk past several hundred buses parked single file on the side of the narrow road into the cemetery site, a distance of about 5 kms. The access from the south appears to have only been for the dignitaries and service vehicles...Why was no centralised parking area or even a bus set-down and turn around area on the northern access road to facilitate the movement of the general public (sic).<sup>14</sup>

2.16 The Committee did hear evidence from the Department of Veterans' Affairs that roadworks on a northern coastal road near 'Embarkation Pier' had made a 'marginal improvement' in walking distance to the April 2005 service.<sup>15</sup> There was also a system whereby those who were over 75 years of age could pre-register to be taken off the coach at the visitors' centre and transported by a shuttle service to within 300 metres of the site.

### **The roadworks timeline**

- Work commenced on the coastal road in late February 2005.
- On 2 March, Turkish authorities halted the work following accounts in the Turkish and Australian media that the site was being damaged (see chapter 3).
- Work resumed shortly thereafter.
- The major excavation work commenced on the ANZAC Cove section of the coastal road on 4 March and was completed on 14 March.
- On 18 March, Turkish Prime Minister Recep Erdogan announced that the next major construction work would be on the road from Chunuk Bair to Lone Pine.
- The widening of the coastal road and the first layer of asphalt was completed on 22 April 2005.

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13 The Hon. D. Vale, *Letter to the Turkish Minister for Environment and Forests*, 2 August 2004 in section titled 'Proposed improvements to ANZAC Commemorative site at Gallipoli Peninsula Peace Park'. There appears to be some confusion as to whether these sites constitute 'work on ANZAC Cove road'. See the question of Senator Mark Bishop to Senator the Hon. Robert Hill, *Senate Hansard*, 10 May 2005, p.18. The map in Chapter 1 shows that these sites are on the coastal road, but not strictly on the ANZAC Cove Road.

14 Mr Ian Tait and Mr Geoffrey Ostling, *Submission 9*, pp 3–4.

15 Air Vice Marshal Gary Beck (retired), Director, Office of Australian War Graves, *Committee Hearings*, p. 36.

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## The extent of the recent roadworks

2.17 As mentioned in Chapter 1, the most recent roadworks have been confined to the coastal road. Along this road—from Embarkation Pier in the north to Brighton Beach in the south—there have been six areas of construction work:

- at North Beach, on the seaward side of the road at the foot of Reserve Gully, where a car park has been constructed
- the northern headland of Ari Burnu, where the road has been extended into the hillside
- the seaward end of ANZAC Gully, where a short section has been removed
- on the seaward side of the road adjacent to Shrapnel Valley, where a car park has been built
- the southern headland of Hell's Spit, which has been deepened and raised, and
- on Brighton Beach to the south of ANZAC Cove, there has been a 15 metre excavation.<sup>16</sup>

2.18 At the time of the Committee hearing in June 2005, the construction work on the coastal road was only partially finished. The first level of asphalt had been laid and the engineering aspect of the work was complete. There are two further coatings of asphalt planned, as well as furnishings such as guttering and safety railings.<sup>17</sup>

2.19 The Committee heard evidence that the coastal road along ANZAC Cove has been widened from 5.5 metres to 7.0 metres of bitumen. Either side of the new road is one-and-a-half metres of platform, making the new road's platform roughly 10 metres wide. These measurements vary, however. The DVA Secretary, Mark Sullivan, explained to the Committee that in some places, the old road has cut 'significantly inland'.<sup>18</sup> This gives the impression that the road has been significantly widened in places. Some media reports claimed the new road was up to 20 metres wide.<sup>19</sup>

2.20 Along the southern parts of the coastal road, the cliff has been sheared off to enable new bitumen to be laid. Spoil from the shearing was dumped onto the beach and into the sea below. The alleged effect of this work is discussed in Chapter 3.

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16 Department of Veterans' Affairs, *Submission 6*, p.2; R. Skelton, 'Revealed: ANZAC Cove trail of destruction', *Sunday Age*, 10 April 2005, p. 1.

17 M. Sullivan, *Committee Hansard*, p. 62.

18 *ibid.* p. 48.

19 T. Stephens, 'Progress takes its toll on sacred ANZAC beach', *Sydney Morning Herald*, 3 March 2005, p. 1.

## Findings

- 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 to the Kemalyeri Memorial.