

DRAFT
WASHINGTON AS COMMEMORATION
Capital Cities Case Study Research Study

APPENDIX B
CANBERRA, AUSTRALIA

**Developed by the National Capital Planning Commission,
in conjunction with the National Park Service**

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Canberra is located in the Australian Capital Territory (ACT), which became a self-governing territory in 1989. It does not have a separate municipal government.

Population: 300,000

The Commonwealth government is still a major landowner in the ACT and continues to maintain some control over territorial affairs as related to Canberra's role as the national capital. The National Capital Authority (NCA) is the Commonwealth agency charged with administering planning activities at that ensure Canberra and the ACT are planned and developed in accordance with their national significance. While the ACT government prepares its own comprehensive Territory Plan, it must be consistent with the National Capital Plan issued by the NCA. The long-range National Capital Plan is continually updated to address development in the Parliamentary Zone, land owned by the Commonwealth, and other designated areas of significance.

Commemoration Planning in Canberra

The *National Memorials Ordinance 1928 (Ordinance)* establishes the Canberra National Memorials Committee (CNMC) to oversee the location of character of national memorials in the ACT. The CNMC is composed of:

- the Prime Minister, who serves as Chair
- the Minister responsible for the *Ordinance* (currently the Minister for Regional Services, Territories and Local Government)
- the Leader of the Government in the Senate
- the Leader of the Opposition in the Senate
- the Leader of the Opposition in the House of Representatives
- the Secretary of the Department
- an officer appointed by the Minister (currently the Secretary of the Department of Veterans Affairs)
- two residents of the ACT appointed by the Governor-General

The NCA supports the CNMC and the Minister responsible for the *Ordinance* with recommendations, technical assistance and project management services.

Traditionally, national monuments and memorials have been located on ANZAC Parade, the ceremonial boulevard between the Parliament House and Mount Ainslie. Constructed in 1941, the Australian War Memorial was the first monument on ANZAC Parade. The memorial honors the 100,000 military deaths in WWI and WWII. While only a few military-related monuments were installed during the 1970s and 1980s, six new works appeared in the period from 1990 to 2003, two of which were controversial because they were not conventional military memorials.¹

The debates over these monuments prompted the NCA to develop a framework to guide the selection and placement of new commemorations in the ACT and to offer alternative locations to ANZAC Parade. In 2002, the NCA published its *Guidelines for Commemorative Works in the National Capital (Guidelines)* to



ANZAC Parade looking towards Parliament House; Australian War Memorial at bottom

encourage a commemorative representation of the broad range of Australian cultural narratives with “as wide a range of subjects and themes as possible, ensuring that all the ‘nationally significant’ areas of Australian history, heritage and culture are properly represented.”²

The *Guidelines* provide two levels of assessment criteria for commemorative subjects. The Mandatory Criteria include provisions that:

- Individuals, ideas and events will only be considered for commemoration at least 10 years after person’s death or conclusion of the event.
- Groups and organizations will only be considered for commemoration at least 10 years after their termination. Groups with a continuing history of at least 10 years are considered on a case-by-case basis.
- A commemorative proposal must not duplicate the themes or subject matter of an existing commemorative site.
- Natural disasters are not normally commemorated.

The Evaluation Criteria states that a person, group, organization, idea or event must:

- have cultural significance for the nation;
- closely reflect the evolving values, ideas and aspirations of the Australian community;
- contribute to the education of all Australians by enhancing a national sense of place and increasing understanding of cultural diversity; and
- exemplify Australia’s unique heritage.

Since the NCA typically remains neutral on the selection of commemorative subject matter because “the CNMC has in effect decision making power” and the “capital belongs to all Australians,” the Evaluation Criteria provides at least some guidance and political cover for decision-makers, monument sponsors and planners.³ For example, proposed monuments to Mahatma Gandhi and the Great Irish Potato Famine were rejected because they were not “part of the collective experience of Australia.”⁴ The Gandhi memorial was eventually erected on ACT-owned or private property. Other rejected commemoration ideas include memorials to victims killed because they were prevented from owning handguns.

On at least one occasion, the criteria have been superseded by popular need to commemorate highly emotional events. Within the first year following adoption of the *Guidelines*, there was overwhelming pressure to commemorate victims of the Bali bombing in 2002, in which 88 Australians died. Led by the Prime Minister, a memorial on the Parliament House grounds was unveiled on the one year anniversary of the bombing.

Nevertheless, the *Guidelines* address some of the key challenges that the NCA has recognized since the 1990s. The NCA is receiving more requests for commemorative works with duplicative subject matter and tragedies that have happened in the community, such as car accidents, rather than national events. To partially address this issue, the NCA had originally proposed a minimum timeframe of 20 years before subjects could be commemorated but 10 years was accepted as a political compromise.

Commemorative Subject Matter and/or Thematic Analysis

The *Guidelines* also provide a spatial framework for locating new works based on several broad “thematic clusters,”⁵ including:

- sites that honor military sacrifice, service and valor
- sites that honor non-military sacrifice, service and achievement
- sites that honor Australian achievement and endeavor
- sites that honor non-Australian achievement and endeavor, and Australia’s international commitments

The *Guidelines* recommend that works honoring military and non-military sacrifice, service, valor and achievement be located north of Lake Burley Griffin. Works honoring Australian and non-Australian

achievement and endeavor are generally located south of the lake. Within the broad categories, the *Guidelines* present a list of parks, campuses and other siting areas where future commemorations with more specific, shared thematic ideas can locate together.

To develop these recommendations, the NCA considered the existing commemorative works, institutions and relevant activities in the area. The universities on the south side of the lake, for example, invite memorials related to scientific achievement and academic or artistic endeavor, while the expansive parkland on the north side of the lake allows for a greater number of memorials and works that are larger in scale. One recent commemoration is a plaque celebrating 100 years of the age pension, which provides financial assistance to elderly and disabled Australians.

Few subject matter ideas have been turned down by the CNMC, in part because proponents engage in considerable lobbying efforts before the monument is considered with CNMC representatives, most of whom are nationally-elected officials. Any public debate usually emerges after monuments have been approved by the CNMC because there is little media coverage until the design or construction stage.

Process to Establish New Works

The NCA guides monument proponents through the procedure to establish new commemorations on federal land.

The first step is for prospective proponents to meet with NCA staff to discuss their ideas. The NCA informally assesses whether the project is viable based on the subject matter and the proponents' organizational structure and capacity to fundraise. The NCA may also seek comment from other government agencies to establish the validity of claims made by the proponents. After working with proponents to refine the monument concept and identify an appropriate location for the work, the NCA presents the monument to the CNMC, which must approve both its location and overall character.

The NCA strongly recommends that proponents hold an open competition to determine the final design for the commemoration, which is also reviewed by the CNMC. Until recently, the NCA provided project management services at no cost to oversee the design process and installation of the work. These services gave the NCA significant oversight for the project and helped resolve issues with monument development. The NCA may offer these services through a cost-recovery system in the future. The final monument design must also be approved by CNMC.

While monument proponents are fully responsible for financing the cost of the memorials, historically, the NCA has assumed responsibility for maintenance upon completion of the memorial. In some cases, the NCA has obtained some contributions from proponents for maintenance, but these funds are generally insufficient to cover long term maintenance costs. The NCA is currently examining ways to ensure sufficient funding is provided for the perpetual maintenance of memorials.

Selected Commemorations in Canberra

a. WWI and WWII Memorials

Several contributing factors led to the public call for new memorials to commemorate WWI and WWII, which are overwhelmingly responsible for the 102,000 deaths in Australia's military history. The Australian War Memorial on ANZAC Parade, originally built around the onset of WWII, has been expanded several times to honor subsequent conflicts and incorporate a museum and other programmatic features. In addition, several of the buildings, swimming pools and other infrastructure projects named after WWII leaders have reached the end of their functionality and are being replaced. Finally, and perhaps most importantly, individual monuments have subsequently been built to the Boer, Korean and Vietnam Wars, which has triggered confusion and discord as to why WWI and WWII have not been commemorated. Proponents have expressed urgency about completing the monument in the lifetimes of the remaining veterans.

The winning design from the open competition is shown at right. The towers are angled to allow light to pass through at significant moments on Anzac Day, Remembrance Day and the anniversary of the date ending the WWII Battle of Kokoda.



Winning design for the proposed WWI and WWII Memorials

Proponents are still far short of the estimated \$21 million needed to complete the monument. The NCA has reserved the sites for the memorials until June 2010.

b. International Gifts

Canberra has only received a few commemorative gifts, mainly from other commonwealth nations. Canada, for example, commissioned a work of art for Australia's centennial and has planted a maple tree. The NCA typically works with the embassy in a "consultative" process to determine an appropriate gift that will enhance the national capital. In some instances, the gifts take the form of infrastructure installations for which Canberra has identified a need, such as a dance square proposed by several Latin American countries. Since these works are more celebratory in nature, they do not follow the CNMC review process.

Photo Credits

ANZAC Parade – from the Australian Boer War Memorial website;
http://www.bwm.org.au/images/anzac_parade.jpg

Proposed WWI and WWII Monuments – from the Monument Development Committee website;
<http://www.mdc.org.au/>

¹ One honors military nurses and the other was a gift from the New Zealand government to recognize the close bond between the two countries and honor the Maori people.

² <http://downloads.nationalcapital.gov.au/corporate/publications/misc/CommemGuidelines.pdf>

³ Smith, personal interview.

⁴ Smith, personal interview.

⁵ <http://downloads.nationalcapital.gov.au/corporate/publications/misc/CommemGuidelines.pdf>, Section 3.1, p. 9.