

## CAMD MEMBER'S REPORT to ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

PERIOD: 2014/15

NAME OF INSTITUTION: **Australian War Memorial**

NAME OF DIRECTOR: Dr Brendan Nelson

### 1. ACCESS & VISITATION

The Memorial experienced impressive increases in access and attendances in 2014-15. General awareness created by the national commemoration of the Centenary of the First World War and the opening of the Memorial's new galleries, as well as the Dawn Service to mark the Anzac Landing 100 years before were significant factors. Visits to our physical sites and websites were over 8.5 million comprising 7.376 million visits to the website (up 48% on the previous year), 1.142 million visitors to the Memorial (up 25%) and Treloar Resource Centre at Mitchell, and nearly 140,000 to travelling exhibitions.

The redeveloped First World War galleries presented an object-rich interpretation of the experience of Australians in theatres of war, and incorporating feedback from visitors to provide a more linear narrative of the timeline of events in which Australians were involved around the world, and technology to enrich interpretation and access to the collection.

Although the funding for travelling exhibitions was cut, private support enabled continuation of some travelling exhibitions with a reduced itinerary. Temporary exhibitions included *Ben Quilty: after Afghanistan* and *Alex Seton: as of today ...* and one of the cancelled travelling exhibitions, *Reality in Flames* presenting our collection of modernist art in the Second World War.

Visitor numbers were also boosted with the Dawn Service and Anzac Day National Ceremony which commemorated the centenary of the landings at Gallipoli. A record of 128,700 people attended the Dawn Service, and both ceremonies attracted a media audience of over 60 million.

The annual history conference this year was themed *Gallipoli 1915: a century on* was attended by 400 delegates. The range of public programs were attended by 274,409 visitors. Interest in the centenary was reflected in access to the Memorial's Research Centre with 35,296 visitors accessing the Reading Room and a further 34,629 research enquires answered by telephone, mail and online.

Last Post Ceremony attendance has continued to grow with the number of visitors and school students choosing to participate and lay wreaths increasing steadily. There is also an increase in requests for ceremonies from families, veteran groups, VIPs and Defence personnel.

#### Collection development

Key acquisitions during 2014-15 include:

- ❖ nine rare portraits for First World War soldiers by Hilda Rix;
- ❖ Eric Thake's *Self-portrait in a broken mirror* (1954);
- ❖ Arthur Streeton's *Amiens Cathedral* (1918);
- ❖ commissioned items:

- large commemorative tapestry of the First World War by Imants Tillers and the Australian Tapestry Workshop and supported by the Geoff and Helen Foundation;
  - a large-scale textile print by Rosie Ware exploring the Torres Strait Islander experience of the Second World War;
  - digital backdrops of dioramas in the First World War galleries by Arlo Mountford and a painted one by Alexander McKenzie;
  - Alex Seton's *As of today ...*, incorporating carved marble flags commemorating each Australian killed in Afghanistan; and
  - painter David Jolly's record of the centenary Anzac Day service on Gallipoli.
- ❖ The medals of SGT Jack Whittle VC DCM, PVT William Madden GC, Sir Patrick Gordon Taylor GC MC
  - ❖ Fifteen panoramic photographs of Gallipoli taken in May-June 1915
  - ❖ The Kingold Education and Media Centre to enable creation of rich digital content.

## 2. COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT:

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Volunteers at the Memorial continued to make a significant contribution, with more than 190 people volunteering their time, skills, and expertise to support front-of-house services and projects in curatorial and conservation areas.

The annual Summer Scholars program saw three history graduates undertake research projects over January and February. They are assigned individual research projects and are supervised and professionally guided by Memorial historians. The scholars successfully completed research projects related to the creation of the Lone Pine diorama, the planning and recovery of Second World War prisoners of war and the work of the Australian war graves units immediately after the First World War.

*Anzac connections* is progressively delivering new digitised collections to the website, improved search and discovery on the site, and ways for people to interact with the collection. The project is delivering data in a more useful format and with new social crowd-sourcing tools, including transcription.

First World War collections of letters and diaries are continuing to be digitised and progressively released to the website as part of the project. These collections are being added to the more than two million pages of archival records available on the Memorial's website.

The Soldiers in Residence Program continued this year with support the Australian Directorate of Army Health, with service personnel engaging in commemoration and collection preservation while providing staff with exposure to aspects of the Australian Defence Force's culture and practices.

The Memorial's public programs and events engaged a variety of audiences. As well as the students who participated in education programs, over 61,000 joined in gallery tours, and 21,000 attended gallery talks, curator led tours and other interpretive programs. Special activities like the *Of poetry and war: poetry at the Memorial* day and performance *Dusted off* were well attended. The Memorial Box program continued to be popular with 564 schools and community groups (approximating to 67,500 users) across Australia accessing the refurbished boxes.

The Memorial continues to broaden its reach with the Commemorative Crosses project. Schoolchildren from around the nation who visit the Memorial inscribe individual crosses with their personal tributes. The crosses are then delivered to Australian ambassadors and high commissioners in 39 countries, to be placed on Australian war graves and memorials. More than 43,000 crosses have been inscribed by students and 16,000 have been placed on Australian graves here and overseas.

The Travelling Exhibitions Program continued this year with six travelling exhibitions exhibiting at 17 host venues. One of the exhibitions, *A camera on Gallipoli* was initially offered in three different formats, but after reduced funding to the Travelling Exhibitions Program, it was reduced to one digital format. So far, 131 organisations have received the digital exhibition including 23 international venues.

A significant task the government asked the Australian War Memorial to undertake was to plan a Centenary of Anzac travelling exhibition. The *Spirit of Anzac Centenary Experience* is the flagship community event for Centenary of Anzac commemorations. It will reach out to regional Australia and help individuals to connect with the Anzac story. This project is sponsored by the Australian government, including the three arms of the Australian Defence Force, and is supported by the Commonwealth Bank and Telstra.

### **3. MANAGEMENT & FUNDING:**

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One of the largest projects ever undertaken by the Memorial, the refurbished First World War Galleries was opened to visitors in December 2014 on time and on budget. The project included major building and infrastructure upgrades, refurbished iconic dioramas and reworking exhibition content and media.

The development of the Mitchell site has been strengthened with the procurement of properties in the precinct. A Project Control Group has been established to progress the next site Development Plan cycle and determine long-term priorities. Major works were implemented as part of the accommodation and storage review conducted in 2012-13 including office refurbishments, kitchen fit-outs and collection storage upgrades across both sites. The Memorial shop also underwent a major half-life refurbishment which in turn increased sales for the shop. The Memorial's Lighting Master Plan was completed prior to Anzac Day. This has enhanced the appearance of the Main Building, the Commemorative Area and outside pathways and features.

Many new projects and activities related to the Centenary of the First World War were funded from an internal reserve, and funding strategies were developed for a range of capital projects planned over the next ten years including National Collection storage, gallery refurbishments, building works, software upgrades and IT hardware replacement. Private philanthropy and sponsorship has enabled the continuation of the Travelling Exhibition Program after a reduction in funding the previous financial year. Through the generous support of Wesfarmers, *Remember me: the lost diggers of Vignacourt* travelled to Western Australia. Similarly, Thales Australia supported Ben Quilty's *After Afghanistan* exhibition in the garrison cities of Darwin and Townsville.

The Memorial has benefited from the generosity of all donors and benefactors, in particular, Mr Kerry Stokes AC and Seven Group Holdings, BHP Billiton Sustainable Communities, RSL and Services Clubs Association, RSL Victoria, Boeing Australia, Qantas, BAE Systems, Kingold, the De Lambert Foundation, Lockheed and Thales Australia.

## 4. EDUCATION & RESEARCH

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Support continued for the following major research projects:

- ❖ *In their time of need: Australia's overseas emergency relief operations* – volume 6 of the Official History of Peacekeeping, Humanitarian and Post–Cold War Conflicts (forthcoming 2015)
- ❖ A major investigation into Australian involvement in post–Second World War Japanese war crimes trials (funded by an ARC grant in collaboration with the University of Melbourne) to produce a multi-volume law report series covering 310 trials and a separate volume on their historical and legal significance.
- ❖ A three-year research project into Borneo in the Second World War in partnership with the Australian National University (ANU) and funded by an ARC grant. The project, titled *Beyond Allied histories: Dayak memories of World War II in Borneo*, will provide new research into how different groups of people experienced the Second World War in Borneo. This collaborative project will produce a scholarly book, a series of articles, and a major public exhibition at the Memorial in 2017 that will represent Australian and Dayak responses to the war.

A wide range of research and dissemination activities was undertaken during the year, including publication of military history books and articles, media broadcasts, individual research projects, family history workshops, website provision of digitised official and private records, and the provision of military history information and research assistance by Memorial staff.

Support also continued for the publishing program:

### (a) curatorial monographs

- ❖ *Australians at the Great War 1914–1918*, by Peter Burness, published by Murdoch Books in March 2015.
- ❖ *Anzac treasures: the Gallipoli collection of the Australian War Memorial*, by Peter Pedersen, published by Murdoch Books in September 2014.

### (b) Military History publications

- ❖ *Australian soldiers in Asia–Pacific in World War II*, by Lachlan Grant, published by NewSouth Publishing in October 2014.
- ❖ *Beyond surrender: Australian prisoners of war in the twentieth century*, edited by Joan Beaumont, Lachlan Grant, and Aaron Pegram, published by Melbourne University Press in June 2015.
- ❖ *The Changi book*, edited by Lachlan Grant, published by NewSouth Publishing in June 2015.
- ❖ *Kokoda: beyond the legend*, edited by Karl James, in production with Cambridge University Press for publication in mid-2016.
- ❖ *Double Diamonds: Australian commandos in the Pacific War*, by Karl James, being completed for publication by NewSouth Publishing in 2016.
- ❖ *Australia's war crimes trials 1945–51*, edited by Tim McCormack and Narrelle Morris, in production for publication in late 2015.

- ❖ *Charles Bean's diaries from the Western Front*, being completed by Peter Burness under Lambert Fellowship funding for publication in 2016.
- ❖ *Korea: in from the cold*, edited by Michael Kelly, compiling and editing for publication in 2016.

### **(c) Wartime magazine**

Production of the Memorial's popular military history magazine, *Wartime*, continued during 2014–15. Four issues (numbers 67–70) were published with a balance of high-quality, popular, and engaging articles. A high proportion of articles in *Wartime* were once again written by Memorial historians and other staff. The magazine continued its popular "themed" focus, featuring collections of articles on: the centenary of the outbreak of the First World War (issue 67, winter 2014); the Great War (issue 68, spring 2014); the Memorial's new First World War Galleries (issue 69, summer 2015); and the centenary of the Gallipoli campaign (issue 70, autumn 2015).

### **(d) exhibition and education publications**

- ❖ *Ancestry: stories of multicultural Anzacs*, developed by Education and published in collaboration with the Department of Veterans' Affairs in March 2015.
- ❖ *Reality in flames: modern Australian art and the Second World War*, by Warwick Heywood, Australian War Memorial exhibition publication.
- ❖ *Ben Quilty: after Afghanistan* (second edition), by Laura Webster, Australian War Memorial exhibition publication.
- ❖ *Alex Seton: as of today ...*, by Warwick Heywood, Australian War Memorial exhibition publication (received a Highly Commended at the Museums Australia Multimedia and Publication Design Awards).

The annual history conference *Gallipoli 1915: a century on* was well attended, and staff were active in presenting papers at other conferences. In total, Memorial staff presented 20 conference papers; delivered 42 lectures or offsite talks; and completed 56 interviews. The Memorial continues to support the six-volume *Official history of Australian peacekeeping, humanitarian and post-Cold War operations* through the contribution of one full-time historian.

Education programs at the Memorial are key educational activities for Australian school students. Over 139,000 school students visited the Memorial during 2014-15, of which 117,000 participated in facilitated programs. The opening of the Kingold Education and Media Centre will also be a major asset in outreach to regional areas. This green screen studio is equipped with the full facility for broadcasting and recording. It will allow the Memorial to connect with a broader audience, including schools, professional groups, and the general public. The Memorial has even commenced the scanning of objects so that they can be viewed digitally in 3D.

## **5. MAJOR CHALLENGES AHEAD:**

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- Site planning and infrastructure development for capability to tell the stories of recent and current operations involving Australians around the world; and storage for an unprecedented number of land, sea and air capability technology objects becoming available by generational renewal in the Australian Defence Force.

- Managing demand for services and materials during the Centenary period and the coincidence of milestones in the Centenary of the First World War, 75<sup>th</sup> anniversaries for the Second World War and 50<sup>th</sup> for Vietnam, domestically and overseas.
- Aligning operations with the pressure of efficiency dividends and a functional and efficiency review of the Department of Veterans' Affairs.
- Sustaining our contribution to the delivery of the *Spirit of Anzac Centenary Experience*, the national travelling exhibition.
- Enterprise Agreement negotiations.