

28 January 2011

Senator the Hon Penny Wong
Minister for Finance and Deregulation

Cc: The Hon Warren Snowdon, MP
Minister for Veterans' Affairs and Minister for Defence Science and Personnel
Minister for Indigenous Health

Dear Minister Wong

CPSU Submission regarding the Australian War Memorial budget

The Community and Public Sector Union (CPSU) welcomes the opportunity to make a submission regarding the budgetary pressures on the Australian War Memorial (AWM).

The PSU Group of the CPSU represents workers in the Australian Public Service, the ACT and Northern Territory Public Services, the telecommunications sector, call centres, employment services and broadcasting. We are a national union with members in every state and territory. Our members work in the areas of administration, sales, engineering, communications, information technology, legal, technical, scientific research, broadcasting and many other fields. We are the principle union covering the AWM.

The CPSU is deeply concerned about the impact of budget cuts, due to the efficiency dividend, on programs and services at the AWM. The efficiency dividend is a blunt instrument that disproportionately affects cultural institutions such as the AWM due to their lack of scale and the lack of additional funding from new policy proposals.

The CPSU notes that the chair of AWM Council, Peter Cosgrove has publicly commented on the impact of reductions in funding from the efficiency dividend and the limitations to improving efficiency through additional cuts to the AWM's operational budget.

The AWM's Annual Report has stated that budgetary pressures has impacted on all areas of operation. The continual reductions in operational funding may affect the capacity of the AWM to commemorate the 100th anniversary of the landing at Gallipoli in 2015.

CPSU members at the War Memorial have raised a number of specific issues that have arisen due to budgetary pressures.

Job security

Staff at the AWM are concerned at the lack of job security and potential job losses. In November 2010, the CPSU ran a survey for all AWM employees in order to canvass their views on the issues of job security and forms of employment to find out if and how all these impacted on their health, finances and performance.

Approximately a third of the AWM employees participated in the CPSU survey and identified the following concerns:

- the lack of job security,
- work-related stress,
- workload pressure,
- unfilled vacancies, and
- for supervisors the continual loss of corporate knowledge/retraining.

The AWM Annual Report has noted that the salary budget remains under extreme pressure and without additional funding job losses would take place. Nine staff positions were cut in 2009-10 and seven positions are to be cut in 2010-11. These cuts follow the loss of eight jobs in 2008-2009. The AWM has indicated that 22 positions will be cut in 2011-12 if additional funding is not secured.

Cuts to activities and events

The budgetary pressures has led to cut to programs, events and activities that the AWM provides to the public, one of its core functions. In its Annual Report, the AWM stated that "cuts have been unavoidable in these areas." An inability to fund the previously highly successful open days, the Christmas carols and other activities and events are examples of cuts cited.

Impact on behind the scenes work

Many of the cuts have been made on behind-the-scenes activities essential to the smooth running of the museum and archive. These behind-the-scenes cuts impact on the ongoing and future capacity of the AWM and limits the scope to be more innovative and efficient without impacting on the quality of services provided.

'Casualisation' of staff positions

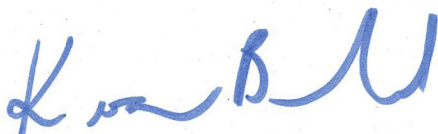
The budgetary structures have resulted in the increasing casualisation of staff positions. Particularly concerning are the decrease in permanent staff in the Security and Visitor Services areas. With annual visitor numbers at almost a million, with children up to a quarter of these and numbers expected to rise around the centennial commemorations, CPSU members believe visitor safety and collection safety should best be entrusted to ongoing staff

The AWM needs a better funding mechanism that allows the AWM to fulfil its responsibilities as a national cultural institution to the community and to its employees.

The CPSU urges the Federal Government to ensure additional ongoing funding for the AWM's operational budget to address the concerns raised and removes the efficiency dividend.

Should you wish to discuss this submission any further the contact person is Osmond Chiu, osmond.chiu@cpsu.org.au, on (02) 6220 9655.

Yours sincerely



Kristin van Barneveld
CPSU Deputy National Secretary