



## The Australian War Memorial Council

### AHA Statement in Response to the Australian Government's Announcement of New Appointments

The Australian Historical Association, the peak body representing around 1,000 historians working in and on Australia, has been a longstanding advocate for the importance of historical expertise on the governing and advisory councils of Australia's national cultural institutions. Earlier this year, we warmly welcomed the Australian Government's call for Expressions of Interest to fill vacancies on the Australian War Memorial (AWM) Council. We understood that this EOI process would produce a Council that was more representative of the wider Australian community and better suited to helping the AWM give expression to the full spectrum of Australians' experiences at war at home and abroad.

The appointment to the Council of Dr Karen Bird, an AHA member and trained historian with a deep personal commitment to the history of Australian ex-service personnel and their civilian lives, is a very welcome one. We also note, with great respect, the appointment of Indigenous servicewoman Lorraine Hatton AO. These appointments will ensure a degree of historical expertise, personal commitment and Indigenous knowledge-sharing in the future deliberations of the Council.

In the main, however, the Minister for Veterans' Affairs' [announcement](#) of the full list of appointments was somewhat disappointing to the AHA and the historical profession more broadly. The reappointment of three existing Council members suggests that the Australian Government has chosen not to take advantage of the depth and breadth of expertise offered by the EOI process. Minister Keogh's failure to appoint a suitably qualified historian with specific expertise on frontier warfare is a regrettable missed opportunity for the Australian War Memorial.

Until better provision for historical expertise is made on the AWM Council, the institution itself will not be able to keep faith with its founding purpose as a 'shrine, museum and an archive' for all Australians. The AWM is the most well-resourced of Australia's cultural institutions and has a powerful place in the life of the community. For these reasons and more, the composition of the AWM Council matters. We therefore urge the government to prioritise further diversification of the Council when new vacancies arise.

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