



COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA

PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES



**HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES**

**MINISTERIAL STATEMENTS**

**Anzac Centenary Advisory Board**

**SPEECH**

**Wednesday, 12 October 2011**

BY AUTHORITY OF THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

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## SPEECH

<p><b>Date</b> Wednesday, 12 October 2011  <b>Page</b> 11656  <b>Questioner</b>  <b>Speaker</b> Mr ROBERT</p>	<p><b>Source</b> House  <b>Proof</b> No  <b>Responder</b>  <b>Question No.</b></p>
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(Fadden) (NaN.NaN pm)

Mr ROBERT (Fadden) (17:21): The coalition welcomes the long overdue appointment of the Anzac Centenary Advisory Board. Earlier this year, the Leader of the Opposition joined the shadow minister with responsibility in this area, Senator the Hon. Michael Ronaldson, to welcome the appointment of the former Chief of the Defence Force, Air Chief Marshal Angus Houston AC, AFC (Rtd) as the inaugural Chairman of the Board. It is a little disappointing that it has taken the Minister for Veterans' Affairs more than three months to announce Air Chief Marshal Houston's 20 fellow board members, including the four ex-officio members: notably, the Secretary of the Department of Veterans' Affairs, the Vice Chief of the Defence Force, the President of the Returned and Services League of Australia and the High Commissioner of New Zealand.

The remaining 16 members of the board represent a broad cross-section of the Australian business and intellectual community. Of the 20 board members, not including Air Chief Marshal Houston, there are five members with experience in the Australian Defence Force or who are representatives of ex-service organisations. Some may suggest that the board is too large and potentially unwieldy, but time will determine whether this criticism is fair.

The coalition is disappointed, however, that the Australian War Memorial has not been given a formal role on the ANZAC Centenary Advisory Board, even in an ex-officio capacity. The Australian War Memorial, the ceremonial and indeed spiritual home of commemoration in this nation, will play a significant role in the centenary commemorations and their exclusion is regrettable. The Australian community will expect that the nation's home of commemoration will be fully included in all plans to commemorate the Centenary of ANZAC. After all, it was on the battlefields of Gallipoli where Charles Bean began to dream of what would become that great institution, the Australian War Memorial.

In February this year, the Prime Minister and the Minister Assisting the Prime Minister on the Centenary of ANZAC accepted a report from the National Commission for the Commemoration of the Centenary of the ANZAC Landing, an initiative of former, perhaps soon to be again, Prime Minister, the Hon.

Kevin Rudd MP. The commission comprised former prime ministers Bob Hawke and Malcolm Fraser; the President of the RSL, Rear Admiral Ken Doolan retired; cartoonist Warren Brown; recently-retired Major Matina Jewell; and war widow Kylie Russell. The commission received more than 1,000 ideas for consideration from more than 600 individual submissions. The commission's report was presented to government in February but, sadly, it has been collecting dust in someone's office ever since.

There has been no action on any recommendations, save for the six-month period taken to appoint the ANZAC Centenary Advisory Board to advance the planning of the project. To date, no budget has been set or funding guidelines determined for the centenary, a matter which concerns the veteran and ex-service community. The minister's earlier statement that funding would be determined in the third quarter of this year has come and gone without a result.

Without funding, Minister Snowdon, important projects with time critical deadlines may be jeopardised. The first such project which instantly comes to mind is the proposed ANZAC Interpretive Centre in Albany. Despite the minister travelling to Albany in late July apparently to buy himself and the government a headline with a \$250,000 grant for a scoping study for the centre, no money has actually been delivered to the organisations which will be responsible for the scoping study and the preparation of a more substantial funding brief to government. Minister, time is ticking for this project. Albany, as all honourable members of the House will only be too aware, was the point of departure for Australian and New Zealand troops heading to the Middle East pending their deployment to Gallipoli. Albany is also the home of the first ANZAC Day dawn service, conducted by Padre White on the slopes of Mount Clarence in 1916.

The proposed ANZAC Interpretive Centre and wider enhancement works of the Albany commemorative precinct are time critical. The City of Albany Council has indicated that, without the government's \$250,000 funding being delivered by the end of this month, 18 days time, scoping works to enable the delivery of the project by the end of the 2014 centenary may be jeopardised. On the other side of the country in Melbourne, the Shrine of Remembrance requires a

major redevelopment and safety enhancement works. These works will cost millions and advice is needed by the end of the year about any federal funding support for this work. I know the shadow minister for veterans' affairs, in his extensive travels around Australia, has been regularly briefed by veterans in small communities about the need for funding certainty to enable community based commemoration to be at the forefront of the centenary commemorations between 2014 and 2018.

The coalition welcomes the appointment of the ANZAC Centenary Advisory Board. We wish them the best in their deliberations to deliver an appropriate commemorative agenda to remember the service and sacrifice of the hundreds of thousands of Australians who have served in the Australian Defence Force. I thank the minister for the opportunity to make some comments.