

Public Consultation Session

Western Australian Garden of Remembrance (GRM) and Dutch Annex Redevelopment

9 and 10 September 2026

Opening Comments

- I would like to start by acknowledging the Traditional Owners of the land on which we meet today, the Whadjuk Noongar community. I pay my respects to elders past, present and emerging, and I extend that respect to any Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander peoples with us today.
- I also acknowledge the service of all current and former Australian Defence Force members and their families.
- Thank you for joining us here today. I am thrilled to see so many of you here to talk about the redevelopment of the Western Australian (WA) Garden of Remembrance (GRM) and Dutch Annex, or the WA GRM and Dutch Annex as we refer to the site in the Office of Australian War Graves (OAWG).
- My name is Wade Stothart and I am the Director War Graves, from the OAWG within the Department of Veterans' Affairs.
- I am here today with Elena Mustard who is our Operations Manager with responsibility for OAWG's commemorative estate here in Western Australia.
- I am also joined by my OAWG colleagues Allison Hourigan, Cara Tasker and Emma Johnson.

WA GRM and Dutch Annex

- The WA GRM was built in the 1960s from bricks and mortar without contemporary approaches to footings and groundwork. It has undergone several extensions and enhancements over the years.
- The WA GRM originally consisted of boundary walls and gardens within. Internal walls were added as capacity requirements increased. In 2020, the eastern boundary walls along Smyth Road were rebuilt owing to wall movement.
- Perth city is built on a coastal plain consisting of soft sedimentary rocks. Karrakatta, where the WA GRM is located, lies within the Spearwood Dune System dating from the Pleistocene age. It is built on sand, and soil compaction did not occur prior to construction.

- Geophysical investigations in 2023 deemed structures and walls at the WA GRM at a high risk of failure. In 2024, an emergency inspection revealed significant deterioration, exceeding allowable limits, within a short period. Propping mechanisms were installed in July 2024 to support the structures at risk.
- Ground testing indicated the soil profile at the site was inadequate to support the walls and any future construction will require significant ground compaction and preparation.
- The WA GRM was closed for public access and maintenance in February 2025. Removal of plaques and demolition of walls was completed in June 2025.
- Planning is underway for the design and construction of a new GRM.

Commonwealth War Graves Commission Dutch Annex

- As the agent of the Commonwealth War Graves Commission (CWGC) in Australia, the OAWG is charged with the responsibility to care and maintain the Dutch Annex, located adjacent to the Perth War Cemetery.
- OAWG cares for 25 graves containing Dutch service personnel and civilians, including some who remain unidentified. The civilians were among evacuees flown from Java to Australia.
- As the seaplanes came to rest in Broome Harbour, they were attacked by Japanese fighter aircraft and all were sunk. There were many survivors, but a number whose bodies were not recovered also lost their lives.
- This area of commemoration may also be referred to as the Perth War Cemetery Netherlands Annexe.
- Given its proximity to the GRM, including shared walls, the OAWG will refurbish the Dutch Annex as part of its works program.

Project Objectives and Scope

- The Australian Government was pleased to announce the planned redevelopment and upgrade of the WA GRM and Dutch Annex precinct.
- Redevelopment of the GRM and Dutch Annex will result in a tranquil and welcoming space for families and visitors to commemorate veterans, improve visitor experience while maintaining respect for veterans and heritage.
- Enhance connectivity with the adjacent Perth War Cemetery.

- Increase memorial plaque capacity from 19,000 to 25,000.
- Ensure environmentally sensitive landscaping with no negative impact on surrounding areas.

Design Principles

- The new WA GRM and Dutch Annex have been designed and landscaped with commemoration in mind.
- The commemorative walls of the new GRM will be made from polished concrete panels on steel poles, in the style of the Australian Capital Territory GRM. It was agreed that the design principles would be “simple, functional, inviting, respectful and reflective.”
- Longevity will be key to the materials utilised for the redevelopment, with changing climate conditions playing a bigger role in the deterioration of the OAWG estate.
- Individual plaques will again be placed on walls, amid flowers and plants that are suited to the area. The design of the new GRM is intended to ensure additional space is available for future generations of veterans who may be commemorated there.
- The new GRM will allow families to privately memorialise loved ones at their place of interment or scatter ashes elsewhere, while still providing an official GRM commemoration of their service and sacrifice.
- Eligible veterans will still be able to be commemorated in the company of those with whom they served, and at a place of beauty and peace that is accessible and under constant care.
- Behind me you’ll see some artists concepts of the partially developed plans for how the new GRM will look. This is just a starting point for our discussion, and these plans will be progressed with consideration to the feedback you provide today.
- The intent of today’s session is to hear from you on how we can create a space that recognises the service and sacrifice of our veterans and their families.

Works Completed to Date

Demolition (May-June 2025)

- All commemorative plaques were removed for recycling.
- Above-ground walls and structures were removed and the site returned to a greenfield state.

Ashes Retrieval Program (Dec 2025–Mar 2026)

- OAWG undertook a comprehensive ashes retrieval program using ground-penetrating radar, historical plans and targeted excavation.
- The program recovered 19 ashes canisters, four during demolition and 15 from former garden beds, along with ash scatterings across the site.
- All recovered ashes and canisters have been collected, documented and stored with care, respect and dignity.
- Soil from the former garden beds was also retained to preserve ashes that may have been scattered.
- The recovered ashes, canisters and retained soil will be respectfully incorporated into the redeveloped GRM, maintaining continuity of commemoration.
- GRMs do not generally include ashes or provide for ash scattering. Their inclusion at this site reflects historical practice and would not be considered for future GRMs.

Engagement of contractors

- Jones Lang LaSalle (JLL) have been appointed as Managing Contractor (May 2026), to deliver full project services including design, construction, and management, plus a 12-month defects liability period.
- Through JLL, GHD Design have been brought on board to prepare design concepts and work with OAWG through the Design Development phase: June to August 2026.
- The OAWG has entered a contract with Arrow Bronze for the provision of bronze plaques.

Approval processes

- The Parliamentary Standing Committee endorsed the 'medium works notification' on 6 February 2026.
- Development Application (DA): Scheduled lodgement with council for late September 2026.

Remaining schedule of works

- Construction: Anticipated to commence in October 2026 through to April 2027.
- Official Opening: Anticipated before ANZAC Day 2027.

I'll open now for general discussion, as well as any questions, and then I'll invite you review the design concepts and come and share your thoughts with the OAWG team here with me today.

Closing Comments

- Thank you for coming along today to speak with us.
- We know this site is a special place for many families and the broader community in WA.
- Hearing directly from you about what is important to you is invaluable to us as we complete this significant redevelopment.
- The OAWG will ensure that, at all times, all plaques, ashes and/or remains are handled and treated with the utmost care, respect and dignity.
- Images of the individual plaques in the WA GRM are available online via the [search for a commemoration](#) function.
- The Australian Government recognises these sites are special places for many families and the community in which they are located and apologises for any inconvenience caused by these necessary works.
- For more information, visit the DVA website. Alternatively, the OAWG can be contacted at wargraves@dva.gov.au or 1800 VETERAN (1800 838 732).
- You can follow our progress via our website where we will be posting regular updates.
- Thank you again.

Western Australian Garden of Remembrance and Dutch Annex Redevelopment Community Consultation - Summary of comments and questions.

General

Question: What is the definition of perpetuity. If the Garden of Remembrance (GRM) is being designed with the view that it will last for 70-100 years, what will occur if the definition of perpetuity changes?

Answer: Perpetuity is not defined in the War Graves Act. The Office of Australian War Graves (OAWG) regards official commemoration as an enduring commitment and redevelops infrastructure with longevity in mind, while recognising that construction materials and structures require ongoing maintenance and eventual replacement.

Question: Are commemorations within the GRM and War Cemetery Western Australian service personnel?

Answer: War cemeteries and Gardens of Remembrance may commemorate eligible veterans from other states and countries. For post-war commemorations, the family or executor decides where and how the veteran is commemorated.

Dutch Annex

Question: What has happened with the Dutch commemorative plaques, will they be reinstalled?

Answer: All plaques and commemorative markers within the Dutch Annex have been refurbished and will be reinstated within the new Dutch Annex

Question: Could you please provide the proposed wording for the Dutch Memorial Plaque to Oorlogsgravenstichting to confirm accuracy?

Answer: Yes, this will be provided shortly for review and comment.

Comments

- Orange coloured or native plants preferable for planting selection.
- Improved parking.
- Open commemorative space within the annex to host events.

Parking/Drop-off

Question: Will there be a parking or drop off zone along Smyth Road near the pedestrian access point?

Answer: Not at this stage, it is pedestrian-only access. Although OAWG will engage with Nedlands Council to enquire about the possibility of installing a drop off zone along Smyth Road.

Question: Is there a bus stop along Smyth Road?

Answer: Yes, near the pedestrian entrance to the Perth War Cemetery.

Information sharing

Question: Will the design be released or shared online?

Answer: OAWG supports sharing design concepts online and will seek approval to do so. The concepts remain under review against the design principles, site environment and feedback received, and may therefore change.

Question: Information sharing has not been effective, how were people notified, and do you have details of all family members to communicate updates with?

Answer: OAWG holds the contact details available when a veterans family accepts an official commemoration, noting that not everyone keeps their information up to date with us.

OAWG welcome suggestions on the most appropriate way to communicate information on the GRM redevelopment.

Question: Some RSL's and ESO's were not notified of closure, how will you communicate with these organisations in future?

Answer: Closure notices were issued to RSLs and ESOs; however, OAWG acknowledges that the communication may not have reached all intended recipients. We will provide timely future updates through all available channels, including DVA and RSL newsletters.

Comments

- OAWG could engage with Curtin 101.1 radio station who have a community engagement segment and/or advertise in local council newsletters.
- The Western Australian Dutch community have been very appreciative of the open and transparent communication that OAWG have provided and measures taken to include them in the information sharing and consultation process.

Environmental considerations

Question: Have bushfire prevention measures been considered?

Answer: Bushfire prevention has been considered in the development of the design concept. The final design will comply with relevant bushfire requirements, including applicable material standards and restrictions. Potential fire-related contamination and debris along the GRM boundary with consideration of Hollywood Reserve have also

been identified for consideration.

Question: Will the use of aggregate make the new GRM very hot inside and potentially pose drainage issues.

Answer: The heat generated from the hardscape ground surface will be mitigated by the use of mature shade trees, open panel fencing on the Smyth Road and Perth War Cemetery boundaries to allow airflow. Additional grassed areas will be provided once the central portico relocates south towards the Perth War Cemetery. Hardscaped surfaces are required to support accessible access to the site.

Question/comment: Could consideration be given to a drinking/water fountain within the central portico?

Answer: Drinking fountains are challenging from a health perspective; WA water requires filtration. The depot office has bathroom facilities and bottled water available to visitors.

Comments

- It would provide more green space if the ceremonial area was turfed instead of paved/aggregate. Like the surrounds at the Flame of Remembrance at Kings Park.
- The design isn't particularly family friendly with very little open grassed areas.
- It is very windy in Perth; consideration may need to be given to non-deciduous trees to reduce leaf litter that could become a fire hazard.

Ashes

Question: Were the ashes of a VC recipient recovered during the retrieval process sent to Canberra?

Answer: No, a family member from Canberra viewed the recovered ashes of Victorian Cross recipient George Howell while visiting West Australia. The ashes recovered will be reinterred in the GRM in accordance with the wishes of the next of kin at the time.

Question: Is there provision in the GRM for future ashes placements?

Answer: No. Ashes were recovered during the Ashes Retrieval Program (ARP) with support from the Metropolitan Cemeteries Board (MCB). All ashes canisters and scatterings were collected respectfully, recorded and securely stored until they can be placed back within a garden bed in the new GRM. OAWG have a register of the ashes that were transferred to the GRM from the former Soldiers Rose Garden, within the Karrakatta Cemetery. OAWG do not accept ashes in GRMs. OAWG can provide niche ashes placements within a general cemetery, for eligible veterans at the family/executor's request.

Question: Could ashes go in standard cemetery and plaque on the niche ashes wall?

Answer: Yes. OAWG can provide niche ashes placements within a general/civil cemetery, for eligible veterans at the family/executor's request.

Question: Were there ashes behind plaques?

Answer: No. Known existing ashes that have been recovered were in the ground.

Land Ownership

Question: Is the GRM a Federal or State Government site?

Answer: Neither. OAWG hold an in-perpetuity lease with the MCB for the land that the GRM was established on. The Dutch Annex and Perth War Cemetery are under a lease agreement between MCB and Commonwealth War Graves Commission.

Design

Question: Will there be lighting throughout the new GRM?

Answer: Yes, there will be lighting at the entrance points. Lighting within the GRM itself is yet to be determined.

Question: What issues do you foresee with potential root growth displacing infrastructure?

Answer: Mature and appropriate tree selection will be key to ensure roots are established to reduce the impact of growth on infrastructure.

Question: What are the walls constructed from?

Answer: The commemorative panel walls will be manufactured from polished concrete and are likely to be installed on powder coated steel posts. Still discussing final tones/finishes. Low-level planting under walls. Adding planting strips along perimeter walls will help with drainage and break up the concrete.

Question: The concepts show the walls touch the ground?

Answer: The renders provided are incorrect. Internal walls will not be full length to enable air flow and planting underneath.

Question: Will there be flag poles again and where will the flag poles be installed?

Answer: There will be two flag poles within the Dutch Annex and two within the GRM. The locations of flag poles are to be confirmed to inform the 90% design.

Question: Will L-shaped walls have plaques installed on both sides?

Answer: Yes, families may request their loved one's plaques be situated in close proximity.

Question: How does someone who is mobility impaired or height challenged reach the top of the wall?

Answer: The walls are 2.2m high and will have nine rows of plaques. These are the same height as the previous walls. The height has remained consistent to achieve maximum plaque capacity. If there are specific plaques that need to be lowered to enable access OAWG will consider relocation.

Question: Could a Trombe wall be used in the central pergola to absorb heat? Could put a Trombe wall in the central pergola to absorb heat?

Answer: This suggestion could be explored with the designers

Question: Will the central pergola have a thatched roof?

Answer: No.

Question: We have concerns about heat levels with so much concrete.

Answer: Materials and plant selections are still to be finalised; however, it is proposed that the walls will be a lighter-coloured concrete and underneath ventilation will assist to reduce impact from heat.

Question: How many people will fit in the ceremonial area?

Answer: What would you recommend? Recommendation approximately two dozen people in ceremonial area.

Question: Will there be a BBQ and rubbish bins in the central shelter or ceremonial area?

Answer: Picnics are encouraged in the garden but the use of BBQs, even small portable ones, would be against fire regulations.

Comments

- The design concept is beautiful.
- The central pavilion should be in line with both entrances forming the central 'cross' meeting point.
- The removal of turf to enable improvements to mobility impaired visitors will create a heat issue.
- The site has changed from garden to a concrete industrial/clinical look. Too much concrete.
- Walls on images show full length, no gaps for airflow or planting.
- The Australian War Memorial (AWM) has received no complaints about Roll of Honour name heights. If a person can't reach the top they tend to place poppies below.

- The grassed area has no shade. Trees are on west side.

Plaques

Question: Will plaques be available to next of kin?

Answer: No, the plaques have been recycled, and new plaques will be manufactured.

Question: What will plaque look like? My fathers was a different style to my husbands.

Answer: All GRM plaques will adopt the current plaque style being a raised edge with stipple back. Layout and wording on plaques will be the same.

Question: Noting that the 'L' shaped walls are smaller, what order will plaques be placed in?

Answer: OAWG have committed to installing the new plaques in as close to the same location as what they were in the old GRM.

Question: Is the office moving?

Answer: No, the OAWG depot is not moving from its current location.

Question: Can plaques of related family members be placed near each other?

Answer: These requests can be considered and possibly accommodated. Please contact OAWG to make a request.