

Public Consultation Session
Hobart Garden of Remembrance (GRM) Redevelopment
28 and 29 July 2026

Opening Comments

- I would like to start by acknowledging the Traditional Owners of the land on which we meet today, the Palawa People of the Muwinina 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 Hobart Garden of Remembrance, or GRM as we refer to it in the Office of Australian War Graves.
- My name is Wade Stothart and I am the Director War Graves, from the Office of Australian War Graves within the Department of Veterans' Affairs.
- I am here today with Ben Churchward who is our Operations Manager with responsibility for OAWG's commemorative estate here in Tasmania.
- I am also joined by my OAWG colleagues Allison Hourigan, Tim Etherington, and Emma Johnson, and from the DVA Property Team, Rodger McNally and Jason Varlet.

Hobart GRM

- The Hobart GRM has reached the end of its serviceable life and suffers from significant structural failures.
- Engineering advice confirms the existing structures cannot be repaired.
- OAWG has therefore made the decision to redevelop the site to ensure it is safe, accessible and sustainable.
- The new GRM is being designed to provide an enduring place of commemoration for future generations.
- Concept designs for the new GRM have been developed and may be familiar to some attendees.

- The existing GRM was constructed over a known historic pauper burial area.
- OAWG engaged Praxis Environment to undertake archaeological and historical investigations.
- These investigations have identified important heritage and archaeological considerations that must be addressed before redevelopment can proceed.
- Today's session is intended to provide an update on those findings and explain the process that must now be followed.
- Brad Williams from Praxis Environment will now provide an overview of the historical and archaeological findings relevant to the project.

A brief history of the Cornelian Bay Cemetery in particular the pauper area and the War Cemetery/GRM

- The Hobart Public Cemetery (now Cornelian Bay Cemetery) opened in July 1872, with the first burial occurring in October 1872.
- More than 100,000 burials have taken place within the cemetery, although burial demand has declined in recent decades due to increasing cremation rates.
- Pauper burials were government-funded burials for people whose families could not afford funeral costs or who had no known relatives.
- The original cemetery included designated pauper burial areas for different religious denominations. The Hobart GRM is located within the former pauper burial area, likely to be the 'other dominations' section.
- Historical records show many paupers came from hospitals, charitable institutions, prisons, orphanages, and other government institutions throughout Tasmania.
- Pauper burials were generally conducted in low-cost coffins and graves were reused over time, with burials often stacked multiple layers deep, sometimes six or more individuals deep and up to five meters below ground.
- While coffins typically carried nameplates, the quality and long-term survival of these markers is uncertain. Due to the burial practices of the time, many pauper burials were effectively anonymous, with limited ongoing recognition of those interred.
- Pauper burials ceased in 1936 following the establishment of the Cornelian Bay crematorium.

- The Hobart War Cemetery was established in 1942 and contains 50 Commonwealth burials of returned service personnel, with a further 125 Commonwealth War Graves elsewhere in the Cornelian Bay Cemetery, and memorials for a further 18 returned service personnel from the Second World War whose remains were cremated.
- The Hobart GRM is separate from the War Cemetery. It does not contain the remains of those commemorated but provides official commemoration through plaques for eligible veterans managed by the Office of Australian War Graves (OAWG).

Pre-field research, including layout and density of burials, how that has been predicted and what records have been consulted

- The Cornelian Bay pauper burial area represents an extremely dense burial environment; far exceeding densities recorded at comparable cemeteries.
- Average burial density across the area is estimated at 1 burial per 1.2m², increasing to approximately 1 burial per 0.72m² if the identified core pauper area (~4,600m²) is applied.
- This density is:
 - Nearly three times higher than Queensborough Cemetery (2024 exhumations).
 - Double that of the Launceston General Cemetery.
- The site could contain approximately 1,070 burials, assuming an even distribution.

The possibility of identifying individuals

- Every reasonable effort will be made to identify exhumed individuals using archaeological evidence and available historical records. Identification will be a complex and time-consuming process requiring detailed analysis of both burial records and excavation findings.
- Existing records contain names of many individuals and general burial locations within the wider pauper area but provide little meaningful information about the exact location of individual graves. The lack of precise spatial information means archaeological findings will need to be matched against historical records to determine possible identities.

- Any identifications made will be based on a combination of available records and evidence uncovered during exhumation, rather than definitive burial maps.
- The identification process is considered essential to demonstrate due diligence and ensure remains are treated with dignity and respect throughout the exhumation and reinterment process.
- The Department of Veterans' Affairs in conjunction with any relevant stakeholders will facilitate a memorial service following the reinterment. A permanent acknowledgement to those exhumed will be erected at the Cornelian Bay Cemetery at the place of reinterment. This is to include the names of all persons identified.

Project Objectives and Scope

- The Australian Government was pleased to announce the planned redevelopment and upgrade of the Hobart GRM.
- Redevelopment of the GRM 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.
- OAWG is committed to preserving the enduring relationship between the Hobart War Cemetery and the GRM, maintaining their co-location and commemorative function as a single place of remembrance. The project has been carefully planned to ensure no war graves will be disturbed and that the integrity, dignity and heritage values of the war cemetery are protected throughout the redevelopment.
- OAWG are proposing a full redevelopment and design which includes the OAWG Office and compound, this will allow full exhumation for the entire site (except for the war cemetery) to optimise the site and avoid future works.
- Every reasonable effort will be made to identify all remains exhumed and ensure appropriate reinterment and commemoration occurs, providing an opportunity to acknowledge and honour those whose identities and stories may have previously been forgotten.
- The reinterment will be in the Cornelian Bay Cemetery and a permanent monument will be erected with the names of those exhumed and reinterred (where ascertainable).

Summary of Actions taken from Stakeholder Engagement Session held on 26 February 2026

At the last stakeholder engagement session, we discussed the following items and received the following feedback:

- OAWG discussed the possibility of relocating the GRM to an alternative site. Suggestions of ex-Defence sites were floated and OAWG committed to reviewing the alternate proposals.
 - OAWG reviewed alternate sites in depth and deemed them not suitable. Development of a new site would not provide sufficient benefit to make this is a viable option and would likely delay the project further.
- Attendees requested a way of providing alternate acknowledgement and ability to pay respects for those whose plaques not accessible.
 - OAWG provided temporary wreath displays for families and visitors to place a poppy and pay their respects to loved ones on Anzac Day 2026.
- Feedback on the unkept state of the lawn and weeds within the restricted area was received.
 - A further risk assessment of the walls in the restricted areas was undertaken; mitigations were implemented to safely enable staff to maintain the area behind the fences. Two walls at the front of the GRM were also reopened and fences removed.

Design Principles

- The new Hobart GRM will be 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

- The Parliamentary Standing Committee on Public Works has approved the Medium Works Notification.
- Heritage Tasmania and the Tasmanian Heritage Council have also granted Minor Works approval.
- We have consulted with the Regulator of the Burial and Cremation Act 2019 and the Director of Public Health seeking advice on exhumation pathways.
- A scope of works has been developed which will enable a tender to be released to market to deliver a safe, accessible and dignified commemorative site with capacity to support commemorations into the future.
- Praxis Environment was engaged to undertake detailed historical, archaeological and heritage investigations. Praxis has undertaken extensive historical research into the former pauper burial ground, cemetery records, aerial imagery and burial registers. Praxis has prepared a detailed Statement of Historical Archaeological Potential, Heritage Impact Assessment and Exhumation Plan to guide decision-making and approvals.
- Continued engagement with key stakeholders, including Cornelian Bay Cemetery managers, heritage authorities, health authorities, local government and Aboriginal heritage representatives.
- Suitable commercial properties have been sourced with the intent to temporarily relocate the depot staff while demolition and construction works are undertaken.

- A tender for the demolition of the site has been released to market.

Remaining schedule of works

- The Hobart GRM is expected to close to the public from late August to early September 2026 and it will remain closed for the duration of the works.
- Once above ground demolition has taken place, the extent of the archaeological investigations will determine the construction commencement date.
- The exhumation and reinterment of any remains uncovered, may take some time. OAWG has committed to removing all paupers remains underneath the existing GRM and compound prior to construction commencing.
- Noting the commitment to exhume and respectfully re-inter paupers, OAWG are proposing a full site redevelopment and design which includes the OAWG Office and compound.
- OAWG see this is an opportunity to support our programs sustainability and capacity to commemorate in Hobart.
- The exhumation requirements may necessitate removal of the pavilion. OAWG is investigating whether the structure can be stabilised during exhumation. If this is not feasible, the pavilion will be carefully disassembled, with suitable materials retained for reuse in the redevelopment where appropriate.
- Before redevelopment can proceed, several approvals are still required.
- At the stakeholder session earlier this year, we committed to coming back to Hobart to meet with you once the archaeological findings were available, so here we are.

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 Hobart.
- 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, and remains are handled and treated with the utmost care, respect and dignity.
- Images of the individual plaques in the Hobart 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.

Hobart Garden of Remembrance Redevelopment Community Consultation - Summary of comments and questions.

Question: Why is it taking so long?

Answer: The project is taking longer than anticipated because the GRM was built over a historic burial area. Extensive archaeological investigations are required before construction can safely proceed, and every effort is being made to identify and respectfully manage any remains encountered.

While this investigative process and the time obtaining the necessary approvals to exhume remains has taken longer than first assumed, it is essential to ensure that the redevelopment is carried out with dignity, respect and due care with support from relevant authorities.

Question: What will you do to support commemorative anniversaries?

Answer: Following feedback from the February community consultation session, OAWG provided several on-site wreath displays enabling families and visitors to place a poppy in commemoration of their loved one on Anzac Day. We are keen to hear any suggestions you may have on how OAWG can best support your commemoration activity for Remembrance Day this November and Anzac Day 2027.

Question: When is the last time I can see the GRM before it closes?

Answer: The entire site, including the war cemetery will close late August or early September to enable the first stage of demolition to occur. A definitive date will be advertised on our website as soon as it has been confirmed.

Question: What are you doing with the bronze plaques?

Answer: As part of the first stage of the redevelopment, the plaques will be removed and recycled. New plaques have been manufactured for installation in the redeveloped GRM. The OAWG works with well qualified foundries within Australia who understand the standards of care and respect associated with these commemorative markers.

Question: Would it be possible for a Merchant Navy Plaque to be installed in the new GRM?

Answer: The site is designed to recognise the service and sacrifice of all who have served Australia. While the contribution of the Merchant Navy is an important part of that collective story, individual representation of specific services or groups is not generally provided, as all forms of service are acknowledged through the broader commemorative context.

Question: What notification or advice can I provide to the RSL network?

Answer: OAWG will distribute a summary of the proposed redevelopment, detailing what activity has occurred to date, what the schedule will look like moving forward and how best to keep informed of major developments throughout the project.

Question: How long will the GRM be closed?

Answer: At this stage the OAWG cannot advise of a specific completion date however it is anticipated that redevelopment works will take approximately 18 months to complete. This is largely due to the complex nature of this project.

Updates will continue to be provided via the DVA website: [Current projects and announcements | Department of Veterans' Affairs](#)

Comment: If a temporary commemorative space is established it would be preferable to have it within the vicinity of the site. Indigenous elders consider physical connection to the location essential.

Comment: This redevelopment has taken too long in the view of RSL Tasmania.

Comment: The wreath provided for Anzac Day 2026 was not entirely appropriate and consideration should be given to providing a 'real' wreath that could be obtained from the Hobart Veterans' Hub.