



Residents and Community Group

PO Box 9724, Wellington 6141

## Submission on NZTA Basin Reserve transport proposals and Memorial Park

### Memorial Park issues

1. The residents and community group Mt Cook Mobilised (MCM) is unanimously opposed to NZTA's decision not to trench Memorial Park. The organisation was formed in part to advocate in relation to Memorial Park when it was first announced in 2007. We have worked with the Ministry for Culture & Heritage to ensure the park is of a standard that does justice to the sacrifice by New Zealanders. We are very disappointed that NZTA has been given responsibility for the park over MCH, which is the appropriate body to oversee a cultural project. Decisions on Memorial Park should not be made based on transport considerations alone, which we perceive to be the case currently (page 4 of the NZTA consultation document says trenching Memorial Park only "provided minimal transport benefits"). The solution for the park should either be to:

- trench and cover the road between Sussex St and Taranaki St (at least)
- route SH1 elsewhere
- relocate Mt Cook School so that the road can at least be distanced and separated from the park proper.

If SH1 is routed through the park, as is planned, it will seriously detract from the park's role as a quiet place of commemoration. NZTA's own documentation ['War Memorial Tunnel Scoping Report', 2 July 2011] condemns its own plan for the park. Item 10 in the Executive Summary (p3) says the current proposal for a road through the park:

would reduce the land available for the Memorial Park, create severance for pedestrians using the Park, generate noise levels that would make conversations difficult and not create an environment that would be conducive to reflection or meditation.

The current proposal is to close Buckle St for major events. But the limited options available to traffic on the proposed flyover bridge coming from the Mt Victoria tunnel do not make this an easy option. The two lanes of traffic would have to be bifurcated on to Tory and Tasman St or diverted off the carriageway immediately upon leaving the Mt Victoria tunnel. Neither option is conducive to those vehicles reaching Karo Drive and the Terrace tunnel, and will only serve to congest the surrounding streets.

MCM also notes that Australia and other countries have set aside funds for memorials in this park. These should be honoured with a worthy location. Option X enhances Memorial Park by linking it with significant heritage and green spaces, creating a people-friendly route from Taranaki St to the

south-east corner of Basin Reserve – with the potential for linking with the Town Belt on Mt Victoria behind Government House and Wellington College.

2. Given that MCM believes trenching of Buckle St is essential, we support Option X proposed by the Architectural Centre, Victoria University of Wellington. We support this because it combines the two desirable engineering projects into one job (the grade separation of north-south and east-west traffic at the Basin Reserve, and trenching the road under Memorial Park). So rather than a projected total of \$161-261 million for the cost of Option A (minimum-to-maximum projections, including the \$11m grandstand proposal as reported in the media), Option X has been costed at \$130-165m. It obviates the need for a large above-ground structure beside the Basin Reserve (the flyover/bridge), which is undesirable from heritage, environmental and aesthetic points of view. It also gives a Memorial Park of world standard, not a dysfunctional compromise.

3. Another aspect of Memorial Park being made subsidiary to transport work by a transport agency is the risk of our failing to meet our obligation for the centenary of NZ's involvement in WWI. The Gallipoli centenary falls in April 2015, a date which NZTA documents originally said was to be the START date for work on Memorial Park, not its COMPLETION date. Work on the park should have priority for this reason, so that the park is ready for the centenary in plenty of time (including time for other countries to erect their memorials there).

4. The proposal to move Buckle St 10 metres to the north conflicts with an assurance given to Mt Cook School by the Minister for Arts, Culture & Heritage on behalf of the Government that the road would not be moved closer to the school.

## Heritage issues

5. The original plan by Wraight Athfield Architects for Memorial Park included the idea of the Home of Compassion creche building becoming a Community Centre for Mt Cook/Te Aro. Mt Cook Mobilised supports this, including moving the building if necessary (but only within the confines of the park and preferably no further than west than Tory St).

6. The GHQ Building on the corner of Buckle St and Taranaki St needs to be renovated and incorporated into the function of Memorial Park. As the primary agency driving Memorial Park, NZTA needs to consider all aspects of the park. This facility is heritage of national significance and would provide a good venue as a 'Museum of Commemoration', mounting interpretation displays and serving to receive and host visitors on days in which the Memorial Park and National War Memorial are in use.

7. If the road is moved 10 metres north, another heritage aspect arises. Buried in the ground below or in front of the National War Memorial is an 1880s-era gun barrel from the coast defences, made by Sir WG Armstrong & Co in Britain. The barrel is 5.5 metres long and weighs 13 tons, and is made of high-quality steel. The location of this item should be established, with magnetic resonancing or ground-penetrating radar. Its future could then be assessed. This has already been conveyed to archaeologists involved in the project.

## Traffic issues

8. If Buckle St is not trenched, the issue of pedestrian safety at the Tory/Tasman St intersection needs to be addressed. Mt Cook School and parents in Mt Cook have raised this issue. Pedestrians

currently fear for their lives with a two-lane Buckle St and traffic on Tory and Tasman often driving through red lights (against a green pedestrian cross signal) to turn into Buckle St. We think with three lanes of Buckle St the pedestrian crossing will be more delayed and less safe. Mt Cook Mobilised asks that a pedestrian overpass or footbridge be considered at this intersection, launching from the high ground beside the Mt Cook Police Barracks and landing at the north edge of Memorial Park alongside Tory St. Trenching Buckle St would obviate the need for this work, as well as meet Mt Cook School's other requirements for a quiet and low-pollution environment.

9. A consequence of the recent work on SH1 on Te Aro flat has been felt in the Mt Cook suburb. Crossing the flat from west to east has been made harder by Karo Drive, and will not be eased by the current proposals. So NZTA needs to work with Wellington City council to improve west-to-east crossings. A specific case where this is felt is on Bidwill St, Mt Cook, on which traffic has increased to over 3500 cars a day. Currently many drivers use Bidwill St to get from Karori or Kelburn or Aro Valley to Newtown, the hospital, or eastern suburbs. Drivers from Brooklyn or Aro Valley have otherwise to go down Willis St to Vivian St before they can turn to the east. This needs to be rectified (Webb St made one way west-to-east, or Abel Smith re-opened to eastward traffic). Two new supermarkets being planned for Newtown and Mt Cook with a combined total of over 400 carparks, will increase this traffic demand.

10. MCM supports dedicated public transport lanes being built into the Basin Reserve traffic solution.

11. MCM supports a segregated walking/cycling lanes in the Basin Reserve traffic solution.

12. MCM supports a fully partitioned walking/cycling lane in the duplicated Mt Victoria tunnel.

*Peter Cooke • Spokesperson/Chairman • Mt Cook Mobilised • 0274 512 312 • 26 August 2011*