



The Hon Darren Chester MP

Minister for Veterans' Affairs
Minister for Defence Personnel

MEDIA RELEASE

Wednesday, 16 June 2021

NEW SCULPTURE TO RECOGNISE THE *SUFFERINGS OF WAR AND SERVICE*

FOLLOWING three years' work with veterans, their families, ex-service organisations and the Departments of Defence and Veterans' Affairs, a new sculpture will be placed on the grounds of the Australian War Memorial recognising the sufferings of war and service.

Minister for Veterans' Affairs Darren Chester said the sculpture would provide a permanent place at the Australian War Memorial in recognition of those who have experienced and witnessed the ongoing traumas that can result from military service.

"I have spoken with many veterans' families and friends, including those who have lost someone to suicide, about how military service has affected them and how this can be better recognised at the Australian War Memorial," Mr Chester said.

"This project has been driven by the ex-service community, particularly Karen Bird and Connie Boglis, and I am proud that the Government will provide the \$1.2 million to ensure its place at the Australian War Memorial.

"This sculpture will be an enduring recognition for those affected by military service and serve as a reminder to us all of the about impact of service on some of our personnel and their families, but importantly, provide them with hope and healing."

Members of the stakeholder committee unanimously selected artist Alex Seton's proposal, *Every drop shed in anguish*.

Sculpture commission committee member Karen Bird, the mother of the late Jesse Bird who tragically took his own life, said she sincerely believed that Alex Seton would enhance our ability to continue the conversation we have begun within the walls of the Memorial — this story must be transferrable to the national discourse — a truth telling of how war does come home and how accumulative service does have consequences.

"Alex's vision while speaking to this truth opens the horizon to hope and new promise. The Australian veteran community and most significantly, their families, need to know and feel this hope and new promise," Mrs Bird said.

The commission will take two years to craft and be a significant work of site-specific, contemporary art and a major addition to the Memorial's National Collection. Alex Seton's proposal, *Every drop shed in anguish*, will be a field of sculpted Australian pearl marble droplets in the Memorial's Sculpture Garden.

Open Arms — Veterans & Families Counselling provides free and confidential support for current and ex-serving ADF personnel and their families. Help is available 24/7 on 1800 011 046 (international: +61 1800 011 046 or +61 8 8241 4546) or visit www.OpenArms.gov.au

“Every droplet has a unique shape, defined by its delicate surface tension, as if about to burst. Their rounded liquid forms suggest blood, sweat or tears — for every drop ever shed in anguish,” artist Alex Seton said.

“Most importantly, when touched these forms reveal themselves to have an inner strength and resilience that provides hope and promise of healing.”

Subject to final approval by the National Capital Authority, the installation is expected to be completed in the second half of 2023. For more information on this project, you can visit: www.awm.gov.au/sufferings-of-war-and-service

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