

Minister for Arts, Culture and Heritage



Ministry for Culture & Heritage

BRIEFING

CREATING NATIONAL MEMORIALS: INITIAL INVESTIGATIONS INTO THE CASE FOR A NATIONAL EREBUS MEMORIAL

Date:	23 March 2017	Priority:	High
Briefing Number:	2017/084	TRIM Ref:	D-0707909
		TRIM Folder:	2010-09500

Action sought	Deadline
<p><b>Agree</b> to recommend to the Prime Minister that a process is put in place to seek more detailed advice and undertake wider consultation on the possible creation of an Erebus National Memorial</p>	

Contacts				
Name	Positions	Cell phone	DDI	1 <sup>st</sup> contact
Heather Baggott	Manager, Delivery Group	9(2)(a)		
Sarah Ingram	Principal Adviser			✓

Minister's office to complete:

- Approved
- Noted
- Seen
- See Minister's Notes
- Declined
- Needs change
- Overtaken by Events
- Withdrawn

Comments:

## Purpose

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This briefing responds to calls for the establishment of a national memorial to the Erebus air disaster of 1979. It suggests that upon initial investigation there are reasonable grounds for more detailed consideration being given to the creation of such a memorial, if government so chooses, and proposes that you raise this matter with the Prime Minister.

## Recommended action

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The Ministry for Culture and Heritage recommends that you:

1. **Agree** to recommend to the Prime Minister that a process is put in place to seek more detailed advice and undertake wider consultation on the possible creation of an Erebus National Memorial

Agree / Disagree

2. **Note** that there are likely to be other requests for new national memorials, and the Ministry will work with your office towards developing a response to those requests.

9(2)(a)

Heather Baggott  
For Chief Executive

Seen by Hon. Maggie Barry ONZM  
Minister for Arts, Culture & Heritage

Hon Maggie Barry ONZM  
Minister for Arts, Culture and Heritage

28 / 3 | 2017



## Background

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- 1 During 2016 you corresponded with Rev Dr Richard Waugh, aviation historian and chaplain, regarding the possible creation of a national memorial to the 257 people killed in the Erebus air tragedy of 1979. The Ministry met with Rev Waugh to discuss his proposal (our subsequent briefing of 20 October 2016 is attached for your information) and in December 2016 you asked that we engage more closely with his Advisory Committee, which he has formed to promote the creation of a national memorial.
- 2 The Advisory Committee has set itself the target of having a new Erebus Memorial in place by November 2019, the 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the crash, and sees itself as playing a leading role in the development of the Memorial, for which funding should in its view be provided by the Crown. The Committee comprises Rev Waugh; Allan Boyce, a former Air NZ pilot who was on standby for the Erebus flight; John King, and Graeme McConnell, writers on aviation issues; and Alec Waugh, retired Police Superintendent. June, Lady Hillary, widow of Peter Mulgrew who was on the Erebus flight, is Patron of the Committee.
- 3 In February we met with Rev Waugh and Mr Boyce, along with 9(2)(a) and 9(2)(a) representing the families of victims. We advised the group that you had asked the Ministry to undertake initial investigations into the desirability of a national Erebus memorial, and that you were keen to get a sense of their perspective and concerns.
- 4 The arguments put forward by Committee and family members were compelling. In essence their case is that for the families of those lost on Erebus it is a painful anomaly that there is no memorial where the names all the victims are listed (although there are a number of dispersed memorials to some of the victims of the Erebus disaster in New Zealand, at Antarctica and in some overseas countries). This contrasts with memorials to – for example – the victims of the Pike River mine explosion and the Canterbury earthquakes. Committee members are working hard to make contact with family members of all the victims. They have developed a database which the Ministry has sighted; it includes many comments supportive of the creation of a national memorial.
- 5 We made it clear that we were at the policy end of the investigations at this point, and that the Ministry's role was advisory only – that Ministers, including the Prime Minister, make the decisions about whether and how a national memorial is created. We stressed that any decision by government to establish a national memorial is driven by the needs of at least two constituencies: those most closely affected, of course, but also (primarily) all New Zealanders, because a national memorial recognises an event that is of very considerable significance to the nation's sense of itself and its history. In some instances, the international community represents a third constituency.
- 6 Since we met with the Advisory Committee the Canterbury Earthquake Memorial has been unveiled. The Advisory Committee used this event to publicise its call for a national Erebus Memorial. Interest groups related to other disasters have also made contact with government, citing the precedent of the Canterbury Earthquake Memorial. So far a group in Tangiwai is looking for support to enlarge the local memorial to the train crash of 1953; and enquiries have been



made about designating a proposed memorial to the victims of the 1902 sinking of the SS Ventnor as a national memorial.

## Comment

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### ***No formal government policy on the creation of national memorials***

- 7 Government has a commemorations policy, which emphasises the marking of significant anniversaries – generally multiples of 25. But government does not have a formal policy on the construction of memorials. It has at times created national memorials when it has seemed appropriate to recognise an event, relationship or individual that has had a very significant impact on the nation. In some cases, these memorials are focussed on military events or relationships. Other memorials honour former Prime Ministers.
- 8 In two cases only, the government has created a formal national memorial to the victims of a non-military disaster:
  - the memorial to the 1953 Tangiwai train crash at Karori Cemetery in Wellington
  - the recently unveiled Canterbury Earthquake Memorial in Christchurch.
- 9 The absence of a formal national memorial does not mean a disaster is not memorialised. There are many other memorial 'providers', including local authorities, community and professional groups, and sympathetic individuals. It is through their efforts that (for example) memorials to the Hawke's Bay earthquake of 1931, the loss of the Wahine ferry in 1968, and the Pike River mine accident 2010 have been created.
- 10 The Erebus disaster itself has been commemorated in the creation of a number of memorials. These include a cross and plaque on the site; a grave and memorial at Waikumete Cemetery, focussed on unrecovered and unidentified victims (though with a later plaque commemorating all those who died); and an Erebus crew memorial garden near Auckland airport. None of these has 'national memorial' status.
- 11 Government can endorse a memorial through such means as high level attendance at unveiling and commemorative events without it having a 'national memorial' designation. Conversely, government can choose to recognise a disaster without creating a formal memorial – the walking track established in acknowledgement of the Pike River Mine victims is a case in point.
- 12 The memorials landscape is a complex one, therefore, and government's involvement in it is appropriately determined on a case by case basis. In the Ministry's view, there is no advantage to government creating a more detailed policy on national memorials, and specifically national memorials to disasters. Its implementation would always be impacted significantly by the charged and unforeseen nature of these events, the other roles that government likely has in relation to a significant disaster (eg recovery, investigative, judicial); and the provision of memorials by others.



**Is there a case for a national Erebus memorial?**

13 It is already clear that it is only those disasters that have an extraordinary impact on the fabric and operation of the nation as a whole that warrant consideration of formal memorialisation by government. The Ministry's Chief Historian suggests that with respect to non-military events over the last hundred years, only the following would meet that very high bar:

- ~~influenza epidemic of 1918/19~~
- Hawke's Bay earthquake of 1931
- Tangiwai railway disaster of 1953
- Wahine sinking of 1968
- Erebus crash of 1979
- Canterbury earthquakes of 2010 and 2011

14 On this basis, there is a case to consider more fully the creation of a national Erebus memorial, though no obligation to do so. Prima facie, the reasons why government might decide that the Erebus crash warranted a formal national memorial include the following:

- it remains New Zealand's worst civil disaster in terms of loss of life with 257 killed, and the scale of loss shocked all New Zealanders
- the plane was lost from the fleet of the distinctive and trusted national carrier; Air New Zealand was in full state ownership at that time
- the crash was significant in international terms; at the time it was the world's fourth worst aviation accident and there were 57 overseas nationals (mostly from Japan and the United States) on the flight
- the plane was lost in Antarctica, a continent with which New Zealanders sense a special relationship but which very few will visit – therefore there is no obvious central memorial, unless government creates one
- the subsequent enquiry raised questions of blame and integrity that have never been resolved, but that may be somewhat laid to rest by a sensitive process of memorial creation.

15 It is in relation to that last point that the national perspective comes into closest alignment with the views of the families. They have a keen sense that the Erebus disaster is still not quite 'out in the open' and that compromises their ability to grieve and remember as they would wish to. The Ministry is sympathetic to this view, and to their desire to have a place where all victims' names are listed. We stress, though, that the key driver of national memorial creation is the need to acknowledge a national loss, on behalf of all New Zealanders. It is only when this test is passed that government is in a position to respond to the more specific (though heartfelt) needs of the families.



### **Questions of timing, scale, cost and location**

- 16 As noted, Rev Waugh's Advisory Committee has set itself the target of having a new Erebus Memorial in place by November 2019, the 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the crash. It sees itself as playing a leading role in the development of the Memorial, for which it considers funding should be provided by the Crown.
- 17 Members have been advised that the 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary does not feature in the government's commemorations policy, but that that in itself would not preclude government timing any new national memorial to coincide with that anniversary. We have also advised them that the government would want to consider the most appropriate process for investigating and creating a national memorial, though the Committee would naturally be considered an important stakeholder.
- 18 We suggest that it is more important to follow good process in the creation of a new national memorial than it is to meet a deadline that external parties attempt to impose. The development of the Canterbury Earthquake Memorial provides very useful lessons in this regard; the process was inclusive and respectful of the views of families and stakeholders, and this been a key element in the positive reception of the memorial. Sensitive consultation with potential partners would also be required; the Ministry's very provisional conversations with both Auckland City Council and Air New Zealand suggest a receptiveness to the idea, but the need to frame it carefully.
- 19 That said, the 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary would give government a good platform to either announce or unveil a national memorial – the feasibility of the latter would be dependent on its scale. Government would have to determine as part of any process what would be an appropriate scale and therefore cost – at the upper end of the scale, the Canterbury Earthquake Memorial cost in the region of \$8 million.
- 20 Similarly, there are various options for the location of the memorial, including Auckland, Christchurch and Wellington. The Advisory Committee does not itself have a strong preference with respect to location, though. Again, these options could be further canvassed if government seeks further advice.

### **A Way Forward**

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- 21 The creation of a national memorial is both highly symbolic and highly political. We suggest that in the first instance you write to the Prime Minister:
  - seeking his agreement to the Ministry leading a more formal process to undertake wider consultation and develop advice for Cabinet on this matter, including potential options for Ministers' consideration
  - outlining the reasons why the creation of such a memorial appears appropriate to you at this point.
- 22 If you agree to this course of action we will prepare a draft letter for your use.
- 23 If the Prime Minister agrees, the Ministry would anticipate talking formally to representatives of the historian community, eminent community representatives, family members, relevant government entities, Air New Zealand and other groups and organisations with potential interest in a memorial. We consider that this

would be most appropriately done following public confirmation from government that it is seeking formal advice.

- 24 The Ministry considers it likely that government will continue to get overtures from parties seeking support for national memorials to other disasters. Any decision to further investigate the case for an Erebus Memorial will only heighten expectations in that regard, if made public. As noted, though, there are only a very limited number of disasters that would meet the first criterion for such consideration, and two of those already have national memorials. The Ministry will if necessary work with your office to clarify the messaging around the case for national memorials.

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## Appendix

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Annex 1: Erebus Briefing of 20 October 2016 BR2016/459

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## Minister for Arts, Culture and Heritage

## AIDE MEMOIRE

## PROPOSAL TO ESTABLISH A NATIONAL EREBUS MONUMENT

<b>Date:</b>	20/10/2016	<b>MCH Contact:</b>	Kartini Havell Acting Manager, Heritage Operations 9(2)(a)
<b>BR Number:</b>	BR2016/459	<b>TRIM Ref:</b> <b>TRIM Folder:</b>	D-0685991 2010-09500

**Purpose**

- 1 To update you on the meeting held at MCH on Tuesday 18 October with Rev. Dr Richard Waugh, Aviation Historian and Chaplain in the aviation industry, and Captain Allan Boyce, Past President of the Royal Aeronautical Society NZ Division Inc.

**Background**

- 2 Rev. Dr Waugh has written to you twice this year promoting his request for the Government to lead and fund a process to establish a National Erebus Monument to be unveiled during the 40<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Erebus accident on 28 November 2019. Whilst there are a number of dispersed memorials to some of the victims of the Erebus disaster in New Zealand, at Antarctica and in some overseas countries, there is no one place where all the names of the passengers and crew are listed. Waugh's position is that this is an anomaly, and that a national memorial would offer surviving family members of those killed in the disaster a place for them to "gather for contemplation, prayer and reflection".
- 3 Your initial response to the proposal noted there had been no requests from family members for such a monument, and that the Government had already decided consideration would be given to commemorations only on a 25 year cycle of 25<sup>th</sup>, 50<sup>th</sup>, 75<sup>th</sup> or 100<sup>th</sup> anniversaries. You indicated, however, that there was nothing to stop interested parties themselves organising their own commemorations outside this framework or instituting their own working parties to fundraise for specific memorials if there is sufficient interest.
- 4 In his second letter Rev Dr Waugh advised the formation of an Advisory Committee, the preparation of feature stories for media release, and initiatives to locate relatives of the 257 victims. He suggested the Ministry should take the lead in appointing a special committee to consult, plan, and fundraise for a national memorial as soon as possible. You responded that it was not appropriate for a government agency to take the lead, but encouraged him to



brief the Ministry on his plans. Tuesday's meeting was arranged for him to do this.

## **Key Points Raised**

### ***Advisory Committee***

- 5 An advisory committee has been established comprising the following:
- Rev. Dr Richard Waugh, aviation historian and chaplain
  - Captain Allan Boyce, a former Air New Zealand pilot who was a standby officer for the Erebus flight
  - John King, Editor of New Zealand Aviation News and author of a book on air accidents
  - Graeme McConnell, designer of the National Memorial for the Kaimai Disaster
  - Alec Waugh, retired Police Superintendent

Lady June Hillary, widow of Peter Mulgrew who was on the Erebus flight, has agreed to be Patron. It is anticipated that there may be a need to augment the committee as plans progress. The next committee meeting is on 28 October.

### ***Media/Communications***

- 6 Waugh and Boyce stress they have no intention for their campaign to be used to comment in any way on the causes of the accident itself.
- 7 A website has been developed and is almost ready to be launched. This will be done in connection with a suite of media releases, most probably at the end of this month. People with a connection to the disaster will be invited to register on the website. The information provided will be treated as confidential but will enable wider consultation. Waugh noted that the media was already aware of some aspects of the announcement and he was conscious that they could be unpredictable and may publish the information outside the proposed timetable, and draw connections to the controversy around the accident.
- 8 Waugh challenges the suggestion that the 40<sup>th</sup> Commemoration of the disaster is not as significant as the 50<sup>th</sup>. He notes parents and surviving spouses in particular are already elderly, and that many of them are unlikely to be alive for the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary. He wishes to make the case for inclusion of the 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary on the Tier One list of commemorations to recognise this. We explained that a Cabinet decision would be necessary to amend the approved Tier One list of commemorations.

### ***Contact with the Prime Minister***

- 10 We are advised that an informal discussion has taken place between a committee member and the Prime Minister and that the Committee may possibly call on him at his electorate office in the future.

### ***Forward Planning***

- 11 Waugh and Boyce seek guidance on possible ways forward, saying they wish to follow process, but it was clear that an expectation remains that the Government will come on board with both the planning and funding.



## Comment

- 12 The Ministry's perception is that the Advisory Committee is at a very early stage of planning. Its structure is informal, and includes no family representation. The committee has had only limited informal (email) contact with Air New Zealand and does not seem to have high expectations of Air New Zealand input. Waugh and Boyce do seem to recognise the need to determine the level of family interest in proceeding with the project.
- 13 In our discussions we sought to temper expectations, in particular in regard to the Commemorations list, but also with regard to government funding and participation in the planning of the proposed memorial.
- 14 We suggested that the Committee may wish to consider whether any of the existing memorials could be enhanced to include the full list of Erebus victims' names, identified as a priority, and we made some suggestions in this regard. This would have the advantage of reducing the amount of funding needing to be raised, and could be easily managed if agreement could be reached with those responsible for the existing monuments.
- 15 We provided Waugh and Boyce with a sample design brief, should they wish to call for memorial designs, and encouraged them to discuss their plans with the Institute of Architects. We also asked whether the Committee had considered using other public fundraising mechanisms. Waugh did not think that this would be an appropriate strategy for their proposal.
- 16 We will prepare initial lines of response for media enquiries to your office.
- 17 We will continue to communicate with the Advisory Committee and provide advice where appropriate, and we will monitor the public response to their forthcoming announcements. We will advise you if they wish to escalate engagement with the Government.

9(2)(a)

Kartini Havell  
Acting Manager Heritage Operations

Seen by Hon. Maggie Barry ONZM  
Minister for Arts, Culture & Heritage

22/12/2016