



Royal Australian Armoured Corps Association (NSW)

RAACA(NSW) Answers to Defence Estate Inquiry Questions on Notice

Senate Inquiry: Management of Defence Estate Assets

Royal Australian Armoured Corps Association (NSW Branch)

Due: Monday 25 May 2026 (Submitted 22 May 2026)

President: Brigadier Robert Lording, CSC, CSM

1. Does the Association utilise Lancer Barracks directly in any way?

The Royal Australian Armoured Corps Association (RAACA) NSW Branch does not utilise Lancer Barracks for its own administration or activities. RAACA(NSW) is a representative body, not an occupant, and has no commercial or other interest in the site. Our interest is solely as advocates for the soldiers, veterans and families who rely on the Barracks as well as the RAAC and RAAC units, as they provide Defence capability.

However, RAACA(NSW) has a deep and longstanding connection to Lancer Barracks:

- Two members of the RAACA(NSW) Executive are former Commanding Officers (COs) of the 1st/15th Royal NSW Lancers (RNSWL).
- One Executive member is the current Honorary Colonel (HONCOL) of the Regiment.
- A substantial proportion of RAACA(NSW)'s membership are current or former Lancers, many of whom trained, paraded or served at Lancer Barracks.
- Many other members have attended training, parades, commemorations or Regimental activities at the site.
- The Association also represents members of 12/16 Hunter River Lancers (HRL) who reside in NSW and have a direct interest in RAAC heritage and capability.

Lancer Barracks is the historic and contemporary home of RAAC in Sydney, and its continued operation directly affects the RAAC community we represent.

2. The RAACA submission made reference to the transfer from NSW to the Commonwealth. Does the RAACA have a copy of that transfer paperwork/agreement?

RAACA(NSW) does not hold the original transfer documentation.

Our submission relied on well-established constitutional and historical facts. At Federation, the Commonwealth assumed responsibility for Defence under Section 69 of the Australian Constitution, which provided for the transfer of State Defence departments — including their lands, buildings and assets — to the Commonwealth. Lancer Barracks, as NSW Crown Land used for Defence purposes, became Commonwealth Defence land through this constitutional transfer. Historical research held by the NSW Lancers Association and RUSI NSW also refers to Crown Grant Volume 14337 Folio 144, which identifies the site as NSW Crown Land transferred to Commonwealth control. RAACA(NSW) does not hold the original Crown Grant.

In 1927, the Commonwealth and NSW undertook a broader intergovernmental land settlement involving multiple Defence-related properties. This included a balancing payment between governments to reconcile the value of several parcels of land exchanged. This was not a commercial sale of Lancer Barracks, nor did it alter the site's status as Commonwealth Defence land. The Barracks remained Defence property throughout.

If the Committee has an interest in reviewing the original transfer instruments or associated land settlement records, the most likely custodians are:

- NSW Crown Lands (Department of Planning, Housing and Infrastructure), and
 - NSW State Archives and Records,
- with some Commonwealth-level material potentially held by the National Archives of Australia.

3. Can the Association comment on Defence's handling or treatment of assets or equipment which has historic value?

RAACA(NSW) can comment at a principle level.

Across the RAAC community, there is a consistent concern that:

- Defence does not always have the specialist structures, funding or heritage expertise required to preserve historically significant vehicles, equipment, archives and memorial items.
- Much of Defence's heritage stewardship is effectively outsourced to volunteer organisations, such as the NSW Lancers Memorial Museum, regimental associations and local veteran groups.
- These organisations preserve nationally significant heritage with limited resources, while Defence retains ownership of the underlying assets.
- Divestment of Defence sites without a clear heritage plan risks fragmentation, deterioration or loss of historically important material.

The Lancers Museum's evidence to the Committee reinforces these concerns:

- Defence Estate has not engaged directly with the Museum regarding the future of its collection.
- The Museum's weapons, vehicles and archives cannot be relocated without major security, compliance and infrastructure challenges.
- If forced to vacate, the collection would likely be broken up, with the Australian War Memorial "cherry-picking" items and disposing of the rest.
- The unique capability to operate and maintain vintage armoured vehicles — a key part of the Museum's heritage value — would be lost.

This concern is reflected in submissions from the NSW Lancers Association, the NSW Lancers Memorial Museum and the Returned & Services League of Australia (RSLA).

4. This disposal will impact the Lancers Museum, and divestment of other sites will impact other historical collections. Is Defence the appropriate organisation to preserve its history and maximise the role such museums and historical collections can provide to the community?

- a. How important is this role?

Is Defence the appropriate organisation?

Defence has a responsibility to preserve its history, but it is not always the organisation best structured to do so.

The most effective custodians of RAAC heritage have historically been:

- regimental museums,
- unit associations,
- volunteer-run heritage organisations, and
- community-based institutions with specialist knowledge.

These groups preserve heritage in partnership with Defence, but sometimes rely on Defence to provide:

- secure, appropriate facilities,
- continuity of location,
- access to collections, and
- recognition that heritage is a capability enabler, not an optional extra.

Divestment of sites such as Lancer Barracks places these partnerships — and the heritage they protect — at risk.

Ownership and context: It is important to note:

- Linden House, the Museum building, is owned by the Museum, not Defence.
- The Museum's collection and vehicles are owned by the Museum, not the Australian Army History Unit (AAHU).
- The Museum's significance is inseparable from its co-location with the Regiment and the historic Barracks precinct.
- If relocated, both the Barracks and the collection would lose their historical context; the Barracks would become "a collection of heritage buildings without meaning".

Volunteer skill continuity: RAACA(NSW) emphasises:

- The skills required to maintain the Museum's vehicles and artefacts are held by a small group of volunteers.
- These skills are passed down through direct involvement with the Regiment and the Barracks.
- If the link between the Barracks, the Regiment and the Museum is broken, these skills will not be replaced.
- The Museum would ultimately collapse, even if the collection were physically relocated.

How important is this role?: The role of Defence heritage institutions is critical for:

- preserving RAAC identity and lineage,
- educating the public,
- supporting Australian Defence Force (ADF) recruiting,
- maintaining Regimental morale and continuity, and
- honouring the service and sacrifice of generations of soldiers.

The Lancer's Museum is a nationally significant collection. Its loss or fragmentation would represent a permanent and irreplaceable loss to Australia's military heritage.

5. Can the Association make comment on how critical geographic accessibility is to Reserve and Cadet participation?

Geographic accessibility is fundamental to Reserve and Cadet viability.

RAACA(NSW) emphasised in its submission that:

- Reservists join units and depots, not Corps.
- Participation depends on proximity to home, work and study, and on public transport access.
- Travel to Holsworthy from Western Sydney is 45–90 minutes each way in peak periods.
- Historical evidence shows that when units are moved beyond their catchment, numbers collapse and regeneration takes years.
- Cadets, university officer trainees and young recruits are especially sensitive to travel distance and visibility.
- Lancer Barracks provides a visible Defence presence in the geographic centre of Sydney — a major recruiting advantage.

Historical RAAC example (Kingswood Depot): RAACA(NSW) is aware of a significant historical example involving the Regiment:

- In the early 1990s, A Squadron and Technical Support Squadron of 1/15 RNSWL were relocated from Kingswood (near Penrith) to Holsworthy.
- This required personnel from Western and far-Western Sydney to travel long distances for Tuesday night parades and training weekends.
- The result was a substantial loss of experienced personnel, including Junior Non Commissioned Officers (JNCOs) and Senior NCOs whose skills and knowledge could not be readily replaced.
- The Regiment was forced into increased recruitment and additional training liabilities to rebuild capability.
- With multiple Reserve units now concentrated at Holsworthy (5 Brigade Headquarters, 5 Combat Service Support Battalion (5 CSSB), 4/3 Royal NSW Regiment (4/3 RNSWR), 5 Engineer Regiment (5 ER), Sydney University Regiment (SUR)), competition for recruits is already high.
- Closure of Lancer Barracks and Timor Barracks would further exacerbate this problem.

Cadet organisations would face similar challenges.

In short: **Geographic accessibility is not a convenience — it is a capability requirement.**

Please note that RAACA(NSW) was not consulted by the Defence Audit before submission of their report.