Executive Summary

The South African Soldiers Memorial stands on the State Crown Land section of the Albert Reserve where the proposed underground Domain Rail Station is to be located. The Melbourne Metro Rail Authority has identified the requirement to have the memorial moved to allow the space required for the construction work.

The memorial was built with public subscription and dedicated on its present site on Crown Land in 1924. The responsibility for care and maintenance of the structure was accepted at that time by the Mayor of the City of South Melbourne whose corporate successor is the present day City of Port Phillip.

In view of its purpose and location there can be no doubt that the memorial belongs to the people of the State of Victoria and that the responsibility for care and maintenance only vests in the City of Port Phillip.

The present proposal envisaged by the MMRA and the City of Port Phillip is that the monument be dismantled, stored for an indeterminate period of at least 2 – 3 years and eventually re-built on the Albert Reserve which will be then restricted even more than at present by the addition of the entry portal to the underground station.

The Shrine of Remembrance Reserve is the logical location for this important military monument. It is the only Victorian State memorial to the 6,000 Victorian citizens amongst the 23,000 Australians from the Colonies and subsequently Australian States, who served and the many who died in South Africa at the time of Federation of the Commonwealth of Australia.

For the monument to remain in its present location is unacceptable to the many historical, military, community groups, individuals and descendants of Boer War veterans whose support has been expressed in the many letters we have received.

We ask that this panel represent our view to the Melbourne Metro Rail Authority and prevent a denial of our military heritage responsibility. Instead of being placed into storage when dismantled we propose that the Memorial be immediately rebuilt in an appropriate position within the hallowed grounds of the Shrine of Remembrance Reserve where the remainder of the States’ military heritage is proudly and reverently represented, and in so doing minimise both the risk of damage to the monument and cost to the Victorian taxpayer.

This is a unique opportunity to rescue this tangible expression of a grateful community to our brave veteran forebears from an overcrowded and overshadowed municipal reserve and have it permanently and reverently located as a reminder to future generations of the service and sacrifice of those who went before us.

National Boer War Memorial Association-Victorian Committee