

# COMMUNIQUE

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## National Site of Recognition for thalidomide survivors and their families Steering Committee Meeting #1 – 1 November 2021

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The Australian Government is establishing a National Site of Recognition for thalidomide survivors and their families, as part of the broader package of support under the Australian Thalidomide Survivors Support Program.

The project is being led by the Department of Health in collaboration with the National Capital Authority (NCA), to identify an appropriate location and design for the National Site of Recognition in Canberra.

A Steering Committee, comprised of four (4) thalidomide survivors and a carer/partner representative, was formed in October 2021, to provide advice relating to the location and design of the National Site of Recognition for thalidomide survivors and their families, as well as its official dedication (opening).

The Steering Committee, chaired by Ms Tiali Goodchild, Assistant Secretary, Preventive Health Policy Branch, is managed by the Australian Thalidomide Survivors Support Program Team within the Department of Health.

The Steering Committee met for the first time on 1 November 2021 via video/teleconference.

### MEETING #1 – DISCUSSION AND CONSIDERATIONS

The main area for discussion at the first meeting of the Steering Committee related to the proposed location for the National Site of Recognition in Canberra ACT. Preliminary discussion was also undertaken relating to possible design concepts for the Site of Recognition.

The Committee discussed the consultation survey, undertaken in April 2021, to help develop an understanding of survivor's views about the intent and significance of the National Site of Recognition. The Committee discussed the key themes that were identified through this Survey, some of which included:

- The location chosen for the National Site of Recognition must strike a careful balance between being close to foot traffic and other attractions in Canberra to engage the attention of the public so that the lessons of the thalidomide tragedy can be shared, but also be a space for peace and calm to allow for private reflection.
- It should be beautiful – a place that people will want to spend time in, remembering together.
- A location within or close to a garden would allow the incorporation of natural elements into the experience and allow passers-by to become curious about, and to explore, the National Site of Recognition.
- Access to public amenities, including mobility parking spaces, ramps, railings and sheltered seating, was also important.

Proposed locations (sites) for the establishment of the National Site of Recognition were presented by the NCA to the Committee for consideration. An alternate location, to those presented by the NCA, in the vicinity of Old Parliament House was also raised. The NCA informed the Committee that the location for the Site of Recognition was required to comply with the spatial framework policy outlined in the *Guidelines for Commemorative Works in the National Capital*, and as such a location within this zone was unlikely to be agreed.

The Committee discussed each of the proposed locations, taking into consideration how well each of the sites related to the key themes for the location of the Site of Recognition that were identified through the Survey.

The Committee was informed about the NCA's process and the timeframe involved in the establishment of the Site of Recognition, which include the requirement to seek approval from the Canberra National Memorials Committee (CNMC), chaired by the Prime Minister, the Hon. Scott Morrison MP.

Committee Members advised the Steering Committee Chair of their preferred location for the Site of Recognition, with the majority of Members agreeing on one of the proposed sites.

The Committee was advised approval for the National Site of Recognition Project, including the preferred location, would be sought by the CNMC via its upcoming meeting.

### NEXT STEPS

The following next steps were agreed:

- The NCA will table the National Site of Recognition Project at the next CNMC meeting, scheduled for 1 December 2021.
- The Steering Committee will meet again in early-December 2021.