

# KANTAR PUBLIC

## Australian War Memorial Gallery Development

### KEY FINDINGS

Audience and Stakeholder Research

Date: September 2021



# Overview

- Background, objectives and methodology
- Findings
  - Museum and gallery visitation, expectations and experiences
  - Interpretive approach
  - Importance of digital and multimedia
  - Displaying large technology
  - Difficult content
- Conclusions
  - Appeal of representing modern conflicts



# Background and Objectives



## Background

Kantar Public was commissioned by the Australian War Memorial (the Memorial) to undertake research to understand from the Australian public and stakeholders, how the Memorial can best preserve, display, educate and share the stories of Australia's involvement in modern conflicts.

The research will provide the curatorial and design project teams with guidance on content arrangement, visitor experience opportunities and audience needs for the new modern conflicts exhibitions.



## Objectives

The objectives of this research were to:

- Gauge visitor interest in selected topics, themes, specific storylines and/or collection items.
- Attain new and current measures on what public expectations are in current and future exhibition interpretation in the context of war history.
- Test audience sentiment on the interpretation and presentation of difficult topics and stories.
- Gauge reactions to exhibition early concepts, such as testing responses to subject matter and interpretation ideas that could be perceived as being potentially contentious, challenging or emotional.
- Test audience sentiment on authenticity regarding the use of models and replicas.
- Identify content with high visitor appeal.

# Methodology

## 1. Research and Planning.

*Initiate*



A scoping workshop between key stakeholders at the Australian War Memorial & Kantar Public.

## 2a. Quantitative Assessment.

*Knowledge capture*



A 15 minute online survey reaching n=3,008 members of the general public and n=1,073 Memorial stakeholders.

## 2b. Qualitative Engagement.

*Knowledge capture*



6 x 60 minute online focus groups with the general public, on specific content informed by the online survey.

## 2c. Stakeholder Engagement.

*Knowledge capture*



35 national forums with n=69 unique attendees and an online survey to capture additional feedback completed by n=37 attendees.

## 3. Assess, Analyse, Report and Socialise.

*Knowledge translation and activation*



Analysis and reporting from all stages of the research to inform how the memorial can best preserve, display, educate and share the stories of Australia's involvement in modern conflict.

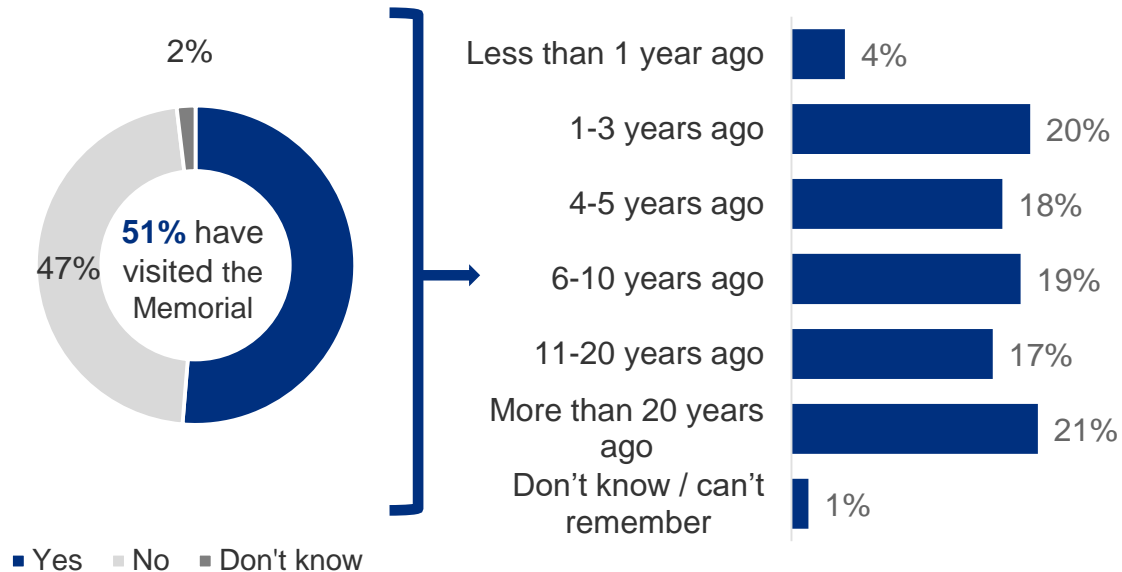
At total of n=4,114 unique Australians participated in the research.

# Museum and gallery visitation

## General Public

64%

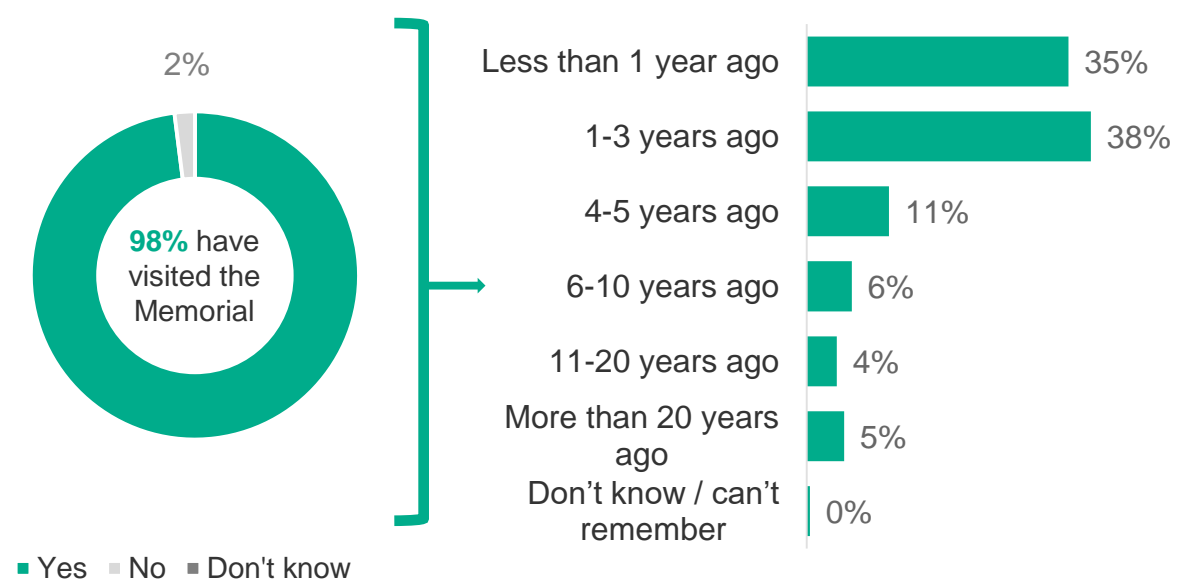
Would typically visit museums or galleries at least once a year



## Memorial stakeholders

95%

Would typically visit museums or galleries at least once a year



# Elements that contribute to world class exhibitions and memorable experiences



## Most important elements to consider...

Well designed spaces

Original collections (not replicas)

Rare objects and collections

### General Public:

- Large amount of collection on display
- Interactive and sensory experiences

### Memorial Stakeholders:

- Content that is thought provoking
- Diverse stories

*"I found with a lot of exhibitions, you can get quite lost because there's so many corridors and you miss things, because you didn't realise you had to come back down and look down."*

*(Interest in museums and galleries, ADF connections)*

*"When I go to a museum... I go there for the surreal and just really engage in something that's not [an] everyday experience. So that's what I really want when I go to a museum, it's like stepping into another place and time."*

*(Interest in museums and galleries, Located in the ACT)*

*"Really leveraging technology, in terms of VR/AI, really immersing ourselves into it... put on glasses and relive some of the events... I think that's a new way of engaging with people, like us, who didn't experience that first-hand and be able to really see it. It's more vivid... so that's exciting."*

*(Interest in museums and galleries located in the ACT)*

# Importance of non-military contributions or experiences

**There was broad receptiveness to the incorporation and emphasis on non-military contributions in the new exhibitions.**

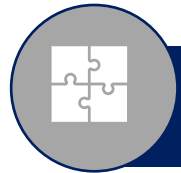
- However, there was much discussion regarding what and how far the definition of non-military contributions may stretch.
- Overall there was acceptance of the inclusion of non-ADF organisations such as the AFP and UN, in the Peacekeeping operations.
- Beyond this there was varying degrees of acceptance of other parties and with many questioning their role and place in the Memorial, where they do fit in to the main story of the operation.



*“Even though they talk about our military and peacekeeping, I think going into a war zone as a peacekeeper, I can relate that to military, but I can’t relate the electoral office or our trade people helping Timor as being anything to do with the AWM. So I think that is for some other place.”*  
*(Interest in museums and galleries, located in the ACT)*

*“I they are in the same conditions and following exactly the same conditions and chains of command then I think it’s a bit different. I would agree [they are in a theatre of war and should be included in the AWM].”*  
*(Interest in museums and galleries, ADF connections)*

# Elements and items considered important to include in the new exhibitions related to modern conflict



## Common elements to include...

**Stories and experiences of those who were there**

**Reasons for sending Australian troops**

**The role undertaken by Australians**

### General Public:

- Personal stories and experiences
- Photographs
- Historical context

### Memorial Stakeholders:

- Personal stories and experiences
- Photographs
- Large military equipment operating in these conflicts such as aircraft, armoured vehicles or artillery

*“You wouldn’t want to politicise the story, you would want to keep it pretty unbiased and objective.”  
(Interest in museums and galleries, 18-44 years)*

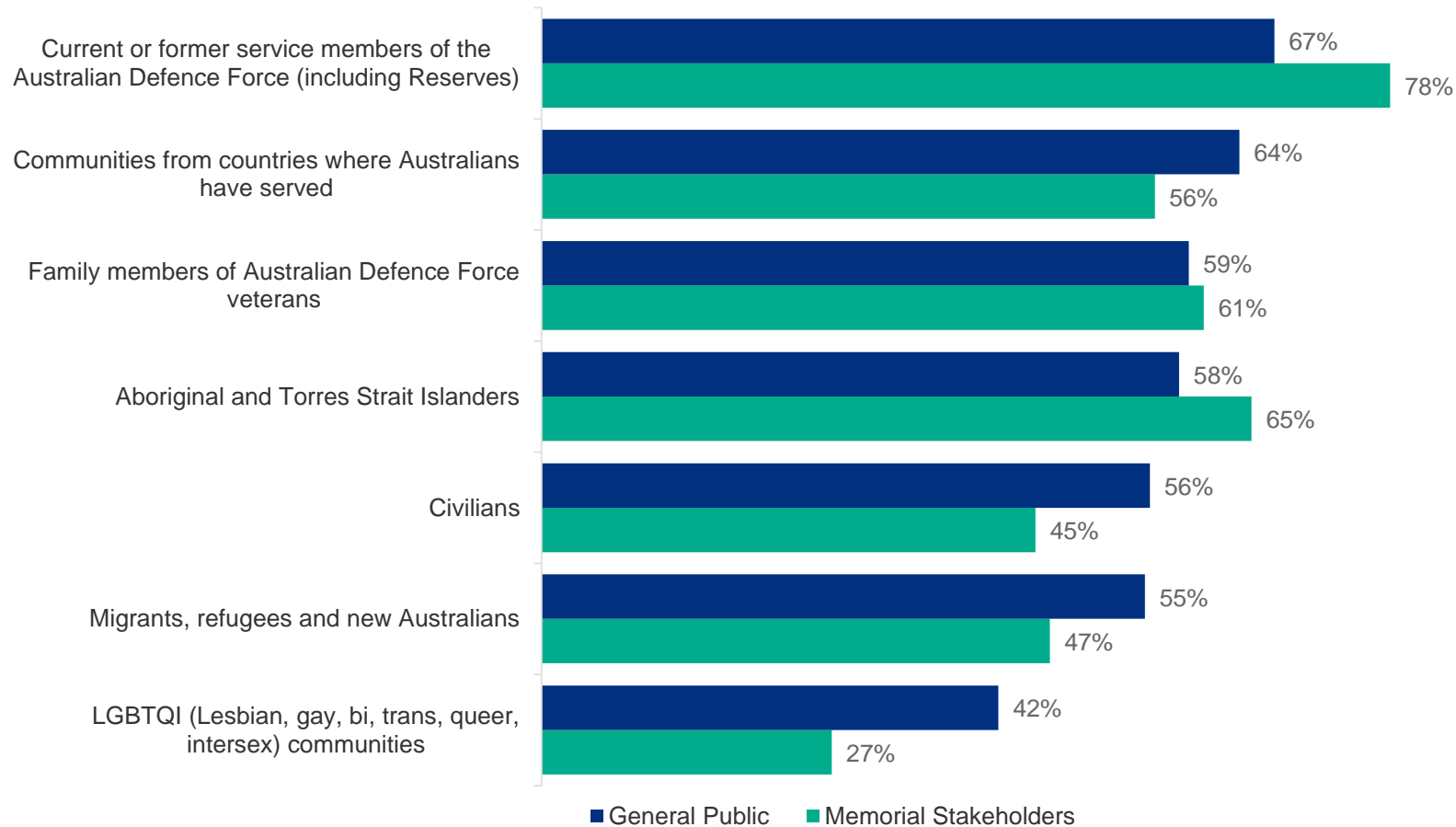
*“There’s a really good opportunity to showcase how things have changed, in a range of different ways... around the use of computer technology. But also some of the communication that’s different and some of the structures/supports that are now offered that perhaps in the past weren’t, both to servicemen/women that were over there but also when they returned.”  
(Interest in museums and galleries, ADF connections)*

*“It would be nice to hear... some of the stories from the people involved, from our soldiers and from the locals there. “How did involvement [go] there – has it improved things? What did it do for them?” It would be nice to be able to hear some of these stories.”  
(Visited the Memorial in the last three years)*



# Interpretive approach

A variety of **diverse story owners** could be used in the new exhibitions to appeal to different visitor groups.



There was strong support for **first person voice** to be used.

In addition, there was also strong support for **multiple perspectives and diverse communities** to be included.

# Importance of digital and multimedia

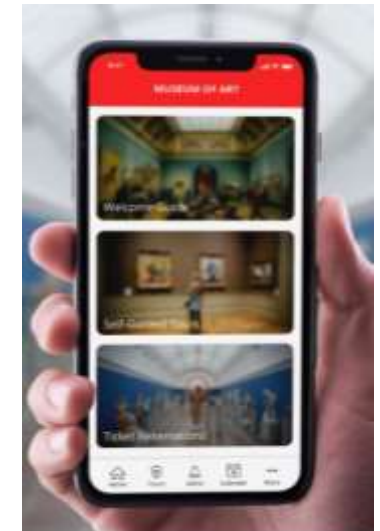
There was **strong support for digital and multimedia technologies** to be included.

**Incorporation of digital and multimedia** should be focused on enhancing the visitor experience through:

- Increasing visitor appeal and interest
- Helping to convey the message and story being told
- Being an additional method of interpretation rather than being the mechanism to deliver the whole experience especially during COVID times.

*“It adds to the experience having things like that.”  
(Interest in museums or galleries, aged 45 years or older)*

*“I think it would appeal to the current generation because they are very tech-savvy and that sort of thing... I definitely would be interested in it [too].”  
(Interest in museums and galleries, located within 300km of the ACT)*



# Immersive experiences

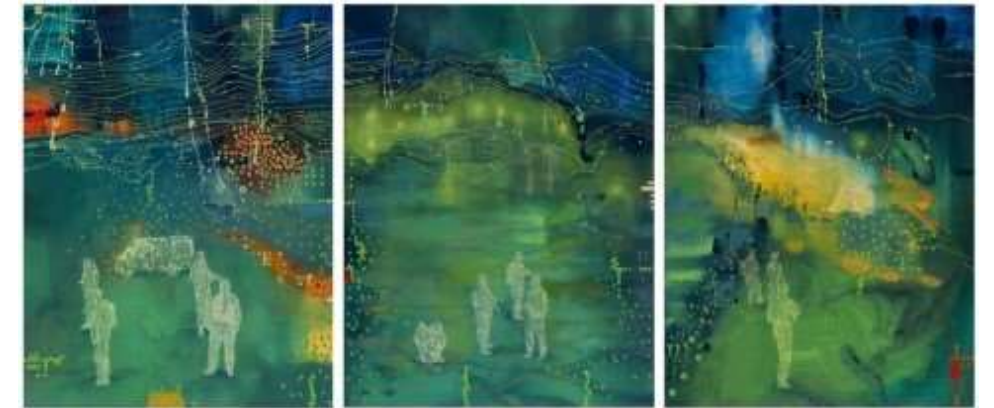
**Immersive visitor experiences** which use digital and multimedia technologies could be considered for the new galleries.

- The multimedia elements were considered interesting and provided a unique visitor experience.
- Many thought it would aid the visitor experience, especially with younger audiences.

There were however a small number who queried if the Memorial was the right place for immersive experiences to be included. Caution was given particularly to creating simulations of war.

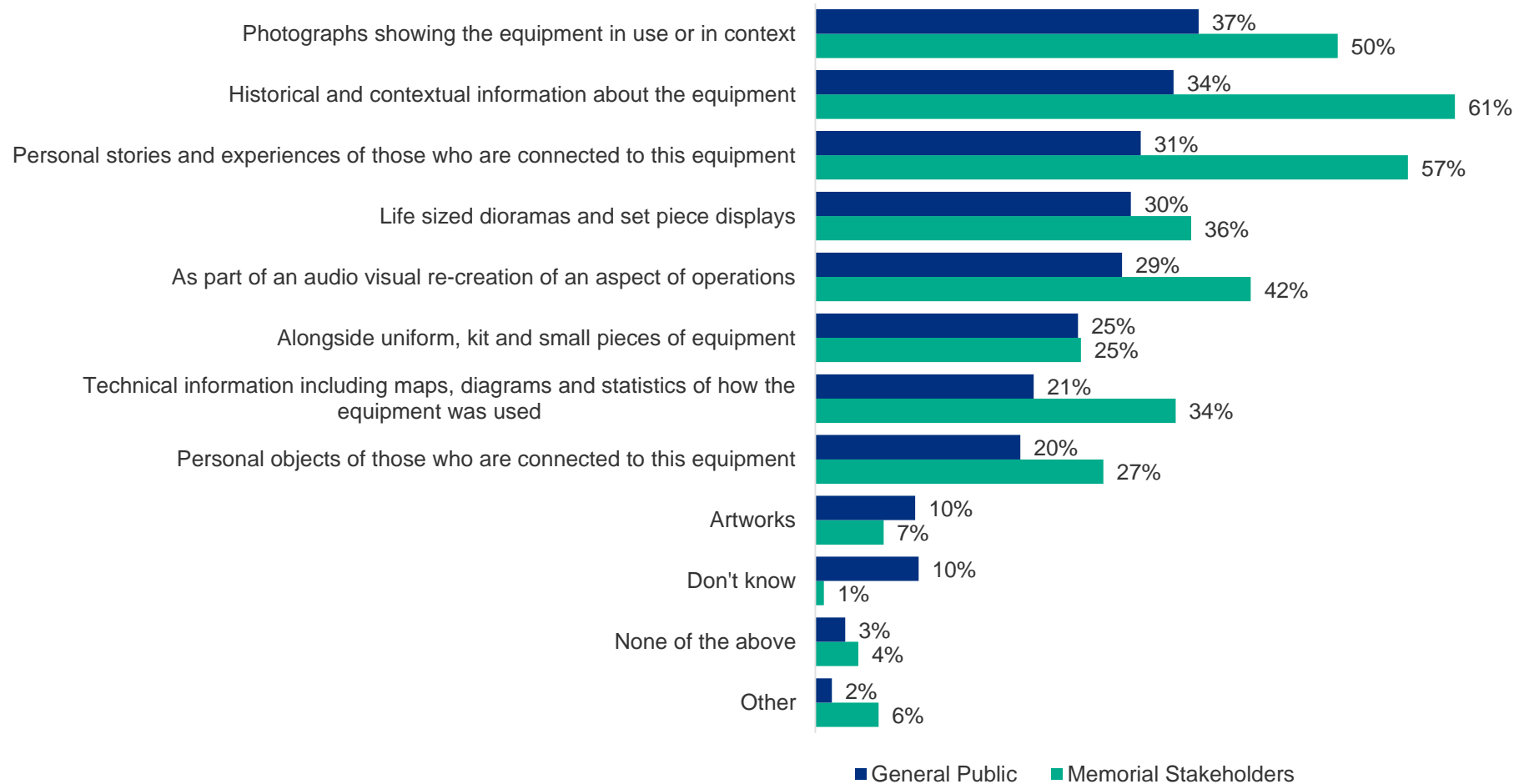
*“This would be a good way to display the bigger options that you don’t have space for... like the tanks and the planes.... Where you could look up to where they were... It’s certainly going to impact the younger generation. They would be right into that.”  
(Visited the AWM in the last three years)*

*“The subject matter that you go the AWM to see, it doesn’t lend itself to that.”  
(Interest in museums and galleries, located within 300km of the ACT)*



# Representation of large technology

There was support for the inclusion of large technology objects, and associated content that was relevant to bringing these displays to life.



# Importance of including large technology

The qualitative research revealed **strong support** from general public participants for large military equipment to be displayed in the new exhibitions.

The participants spoke about:

- The personal appeal of the objects at both the individual level as well as life stage need (i.e. adults with dependent children).
- The use of objects playing a role in memorable experiences by providing perspective through being able to see the object and its capabilities.

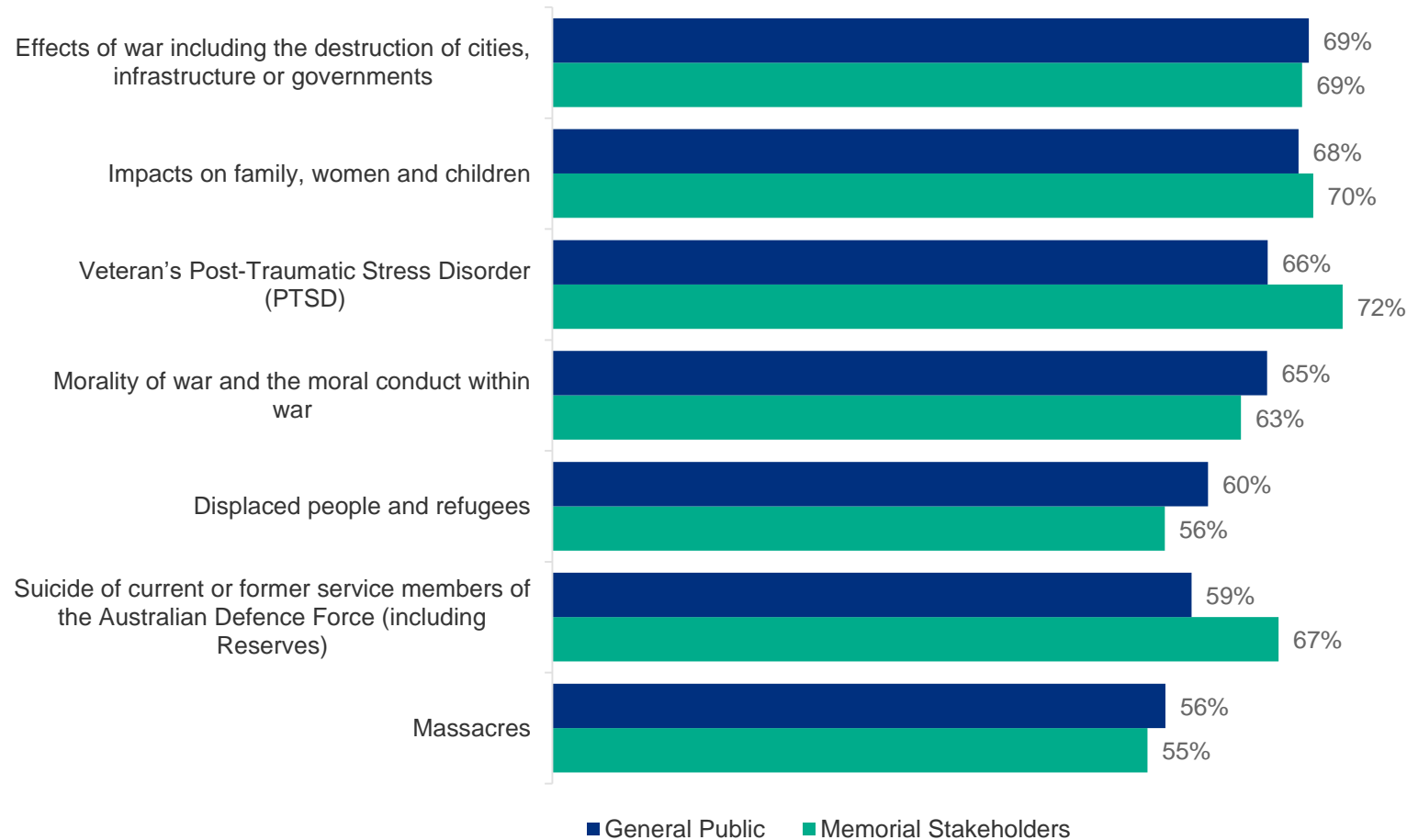
*“It’s very hard to get perspective on the size of some of these things, and the capabilities of them, possibly, if you don’t see them. If you see a photo of them, it’s a bit abstract.”*  
(Interest in museums and galleries, aged 45 years or older)

*“They are very impressive at face value. They are really important. Once you are standing in front of the piece of equipment, you can’t help but be in awe of it. If it is at all possible, the ability to be tactile with the exhibit would be amazing, but often that’s not possible. But if it was for example – take the APC – if you could have had a way by which you basically created an ingress/egress point to get in/out and people could sort of walk through it and walk back out...”*  
(Visited the AWM in the last three years)

*“I really like it... imagine if we could put a real situation [in]. A bunch of kids sitting in the back of one of the trucks [picture in the stimulus materials referenced]... They are bouncing along on a wooden step or whatever type of seat they have got in the back, whatever they had in the previous years to give them that life experience, where they can actually get into it, recognise how uncomfortable it is. I reckon it is great education.”*  
(Interest in museums and galleries, ADF connections)

# Representation of difficult content

There was moderate to high levels of interest in the inclusion of difficult content.



There was also support for the exhibition content that may address topics such as the morality, legality and social impacts of war:

- Morality and legality of war e.g., the Middle East inquiry
- Illegal conduct during times of war e.g., war crimes
- Stories that question Australian values
- Stories covering public debate, such as anti-war protests or sentiment
- The global position of Australia in the world and impact of global events on Australia e.g., 9/11
- Perspectives of the other side, for example from civilians and refugees
- Massacres and genocides.

# Conclusions

- The responses to the gallery topics, stories and elements used to convey these stories, and the general sentiment towards the Memorial is highly positive.
- Among both audience groups, the primary purpose of the Memorial is to provide ‘a connection to the stories, objects and experiences of war for current and future generations’.
- The Memorial is seen as world-class and as thought provoking yet commemorative, and able to tell at times difficult stories and content in an appropriate way.
- It was clear there is a widespread sense of trust in the Memorial to deliver excellent exhibitions, based on prior visits and experiences at the Memorial.
- The priority for the development of the new galleries is to present ‘relevant’ content to broad audiences, be impartial and to be ‘accountable’ for presenting facts and ‘truth telling’ all sides of the story of war.
- There was widespread acknowledgement of the need and expectation, to discuss difficult and challenging content, which many feel the Memorial has the experience and expertise to address in an appropriate manner.
- There were some who had concerns about the possibility of ‘glorifying war’, or conversely, that an anti-war or Peace-making message was an opportunity to explore stories other than just conflict and war-like operations. The priority should be explaining the ‘why’ of war and showing the impacts.



# Conclusions

Exhibitions on Australian modern conflicts in the **Middle East region (including Afghanistan)** garnered widespread interest.

- Specific understanding of Australia's role in these was limited among the general public.
- Importance of telling 'the whole truth' with regards to the broader political contexts and the lasting social impacts, while Memorial stakeholders feared that some of these stories would be 'watered down' or their true impact minimised.
- In terms of the interpretive techniques, the Memorial has an opportunity to utilise a range of items, stories and technologies to best tell these stories.

All audiences were interested in exhibitions on Australia's role in **peacekeeping operations and humanitarian and disaster relief.**

- However knowledge around these topics was often much more limited and exhibition information will need to clearly outline the ADF involvement with these operations.

Exhibitions that included **innovative digital and/or multimedia elements** had broad appeal across all audience groups.

- Specific feedback on what should be included was often difficult to imagine for many, but some warned about going 'too far' with solely digital exhibitions or presenting simulated war fighting, with many pointing out the strength of the Memorial is its collection of objects, including Large Technology Objects.

