

SIR

KEITH SMITH, K.B.E.

G.P.O. BOX 627  
SYDNEY, AUSTRALIA

1st July, 1955.

The Rt Hon. R.G. Menzies, C.H., Q.C.,  
Prime Minister,  
Parliament House,  
CANBERRA. A.C.T.



Dear Mr. Menzies,

I hesitate to add to your burdens, but I was more than disturbed to learn that the Vickers Vimy had not only been removed from its proud place in the Australian War Memorial at Canberra, but that it now lies cased somewhere on the Aerodrome whilst an attempt is being made to find a home for it in South Australia - the partially derelict Parafield has been suggested!!

I venture the suggestion that in the years to come the aircraft will be of increasing historical interest to Australians and visitors alike and its home, therefore, should be in Australia's Capital City.

It has apparently all been done very quietly and the first I heard of it was a press telephone call from Adelaide.

I suppose it is too late for anything to be done now, but I felt that I should personally let you know how concerned I am about the matter.

With kind regards.

Yours sincerely,

*Keith Smith*

EJO. KMF

862/14

12 JUL 1955

Dear Sir Keith,

I have received your letter of 1st July, in which you have mentioned the matter of the removal of the Vickers Vimy from the Australian War Memorial and the proposal to send it to Adelaide.

May I assure you at the outset that the removal of the machine from the War Memorial building does not carry any imputation that it has suffered, or is likely to suffer, any diminution of its historical value.

When the machine was first placed in the War Memorial none of us could have foreseen that Australia would be forced to fight in another major war and that we would be required to find room in the building for a great number of exhibits perpetuating our further efforts on the field of battle. That position, however, did arise and the War Museum has had to be re-organized.

In that re-organization we considered the value of the Vickers Vimy as an exhibit connected with war. It appeared to us that its chief value lay not in its connection with battles fought and won but in its connection with the gallant and epic flight undertaken by your late brother and yourself so many years ago. The conclusion drawn was that it should have a more appropriate home, and we set out to find one.

At this juncture, certain people in Adelaide, a city that has always been proud of being your birthplace, asked if they might have the machine on exhibition in the city. It appears that the Applied Science Museum of the South Australian School of Mines and Industries was prepared to have the machine properly housed and cared for.

I am, however, not aware at present of just what the request entails and I have asked for further details, particularly with regard to the care of the machine. I am advised that, for its own sake, the machine should be assembled and properly housed to prevent any deterioration of the fabric. I do assure you that I have given no undertaking yet to send the machine to Adelaide, nor will I do so unless I can be assured of its safekeeping.

I might mention that, even if the proposal to have the machine in Adelaide proves satisfactory from the point of view of its preservation, I would not entertain any thought of sending it there on a permanent basis. The machine would merely be on loan to the city until such time as we could find an adequate and permanent resting place for such an historic object. I would regret the day when it would no longer be a source of pride and veneration to all Australians in a setting which will be appropriate to our splendid record in the fields of history and pioneering.

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I hope that this letter will serve to reassure you that I am just as zealous in safeguarding the machine as yourself and that it will continue to receive proper care and attention.

Yours sincerely,



ROBERT G. MENZIES

Prime Minister.

Sir Keith Smith, K.B.E., F.R.G.S.,  
G.P.O. Box 627,  
SYDNEY.

I spoke to two together about the present arrangements for the plane. The R200 are now repairable and hence the machine properly housed in a dismantled & crated condition. We need have no real fear since Sir John Sulzby is personally interested. In the event of the rehabilitation of a Civil Aviation museum there are a number of other planes available for exhibition.

