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Ms Simone Saunders
Chief Executive Officer
City of Darwin

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Dear Ms Saunders

I am writing to advise you that the Heritage Council has resolved to invite submissions as to whether The Esplanade should be permanently declared as a heritage place under the *Heritage Act 2011* (the Act).

Submissions must be in writing, addressed to the Heritage Council, and should be received by **Monday 15 May 2023**. You may write to the address at the top of this letter, or send your submission via email to heritagecouncil@nt.gov.au.

The Statement of Heritage Value for The Esplanade is attached.

A Survey Plan of the Proposed Heritage Site Lot 11272(A) Town of Darwin is attached.

I also need to advise you that in accordance with the requirements of the Act, the Minister for Arts, Culture and Heritage has signed an instrument provisionally declaring The Esplanade as a heritage place. This means that no major work is to be carried out without seeking permission under the terms of the Act.

These restrictions stay in place until a final decision is made as to whether The Esplanade should be permanently protected by the Act. There are no restrictions on regular maintenance or repair work, or any work that may need to be undertaken to ensure public safety.

If you have any queries in relation to this matter, please contact the Acting Director Heritage Branch, Department of Territory Families, Housing and Communities, Dr David Steinberg, on telephone 8999 5083 or email david.steinberg@nt.gov.au. Otherwise I thank you in anticipation for your response.

Yours sincerely



Allan McGill
Chairperson

14 April 2023

STATEMENT OF HERITAGE VALUE

The Esplanade is a large area of public open space bordering the Darwin Central Business District and overlooking Darwin Harbour. Aboriginal sacred sites and a number of historical features and significant memorials are located across landscaped, open parkland fringed by remnant rainforest.

The Esplanade is a legacy of the original 1869 Palmerston (Darwin) town plan and echoes town planning principles imported from South Australia. It represents a colonial cultural treatment of the landscape through the provision of planned, public space. Maintaining public rights to this green space has been the focus of continual public advocacy.

Lands encompassed by The Esplanade are of cultural significance to Larrakia Aboriginal people because of the presence of the Damoe-ra sacred site which is represented by a freshwater spring created by the actions of a Dreaming ancestor, the doemgilla trevally fish. The Larrakia lived on Lameroo Beach and The Esplanade until the powers of the Aboriginals Act 1910 saw them relocated to the Kahlin Aboriginal Compound in 1912. This site is therefore associated with the increased marginalisation of Aboriginal people from the town at that time.

The Esplanade continues to have high aesthetic significance and is a landmark feature of the city. The monsoon rainforest along the escarpment made for a memorable entry for boats entering the harbour and reinforced the identity of the tropical, harbour town. The remnant rainforest is one of a small number of important rainforest patches on the Darwin Peninsular which act interdependently to maintain biodiversity.

While the extent of The Esplanade has changed over time, it has remained true to purpose for more than one hundred and fifty years. Its multi-layered history gives it a unique place in the social and cultural history of Darwin. The fresh water springs that sustained the Larrakia people were appropriated as the earliest water sources for the town. Fruit and vegetable gardens planted around the springs at Doctor's Gully were taken over by Chinese people, who worked them for many decades. 'Greek Town' was established above the Gully. Popular swimming baths were developed at Lameroo Beach in 1921.

Between 1882 and the 1950s, the Darwin Oval was the centre for sporting activity in the town with the earliest cricket and Australian Rules football games played there. The Oval has been the destination point for military, May Day and Bougainvillea parades and has been the location for significant events like Royal visits. Across time The Esplanade has been a meeting and gathering place for cross-cultural encounters, picnics, celebrations, music and cultural festivals, protests and political agitation.

The Esplanade was occupied by the military during World War II and the anti-aircraft guns positioned there are claimed to be the first to fire at attacking Japanese aircraft on 19 February 1942. Further military infrastructure developed on The Esplanade include five Naval Oil Tanks and the RAAF Catalina base at Doctor's Gully, remnants of which still exist. The relocation of the Cenotaph to The Esplanade in 1990, together with the USS Peary Memorial, the ANZAC Centenary Memorial Garden and Walk, and the Civilians Memorial Entrance has seen The Esplanade become the major site for official military commemorations and tourist visitation. They serve as poignant reminders of the sacrifices made during wartime and of Darwin's important role in World War II.