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Mr Shane Rattenbury MLA
Mr Chris Steel MLA
Ms Rachel Stephen-Smith MLA
Ms Candice Burch MLA
Ms Elizabeth Lee MLA

HERITAGE NOMINATION – ORIGINAL CANBERRA AERODROME REMNANTS AT DICKSON

Dear Mr Flannery

Please find enclosed our joint nomination with the No. 3 Squadron Royal Australian Air Force (RAAF) Association for the original Canberra Aerodrome remnants at Dickson.

This aerodrome was first shown on Walter Burley Griffin's final plan and blueprint, drawn in 1918 and published in 1922. It was operational for almost 3 years and located on Edward Shumack's soldier settlement block. The southern boundary of the aerodrome was Majura Avenue.

Members of our two organisations have carried out intensive research over several years, and we believe the former aerodrome at Dickson, the first in the Territory, contains significant archaeological remains that date back to the dawn of aviation in Australia. The nomination is strongly supported by Engineers Australia and the Canberra and District Historical Society.

The central whitewashed concrete ring at Blocks 25-26 Section 72 Dickson and two of the four original concrete lockspit boundary markers are believed to be the last tangible remnants of the landing ground. They form the historic link to the site's use by the Federal Capital Commission (FCC) in the mid-1920s for the early planning of

Canberra using the most modern technology available. That involved working closely with the RAAF to carry out aerial photography.

In order to establish with confidence that the key remnants below ground still exist, provisional registration is necessary to ensure heritage protection measures are adopted within the immediate vicinity of the central concrete ring that marked the landing ground. The central ring's location is known from the FCC's historic 1926 survey plus aerial photography in 1950-58. Fragments found scattered nearby, a portion of concrete on the surface at Dickson Wetlands, together with the history of development and land use in this area, give us cause to believe that their continued existence is plausible.

Provisional registration will make it possible for further research and archaeological investigations to be conducted using ground penetrating radar, so as to accurately determine the current extent of archaeological remains.

Development of the aerodrome was important to the early planning of Canberra, as well as to the nascent aviation industry in the Territory:

- the aerodrome was the first official aviation facility in the ACT planned, leased and developed for the purpose
- the aerodrome hosted both civilian and military aircraft
- early planning of Canberra relied heavily on aerial photography missions flying from this aerodrome, especially the No. 3 Squadron of the Royal Australian Air Force
- the capital's first fatal air crash took place on site while No. 3 Squadron was performing an aerial photography mission for the FCC
- the capital's first fatal air crash was documented shortly after the event as part of the photographic legacy of William James (Jack) Mildenhall, working for the FCC
- the two Air Force members killed in this air crash were both buried in the Canberra region
- the farm worker Walter Johnson who attempted to save their lives, and was subsequently recognised for his heroic efforts, has close relatives living in the Canberra region
- the aerodrome served as an emergency landing site on the Adelaide-Sydney service commenced by the Australian Aerial Service in 1924
- the aerodrome was the entry point to Canberra for visiting dignitaries
- Engineers Australia has recognised the aerodrome as significant in the development of aviation in the ACT and published its engineering history
- Canberra and District Historical Society has recognised the aerodrome as significant in the history of Canberra and published recent research
- remains of the central concrete ring are believed to be the only surviving example in Australia of the very earliest method for marking aerodromes
- the site demonstrates the transition from a rural outer area through multiple stages of land use and development to shape the national capital.

The tragic loss of two serving Air Force members in the capital's first fatal air crash, which took place on this aerodrome, also deserves to be properly commemorated. The act of telling these stories and honouring our shared past endeavours plays an important role in community-building and placemaking.

Recognising the historic place, and telling the story of the Territory's earliest aviation heritage for generations to come, represents an exciting opportunity and an investment in the future.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Gary Kent". The signature is written in dark ink on a light-colored background.

Gary Kent
President

15 June 2020