

VIRGINIA TOWNSITE SURVEY

STATEMENT OF HERITAGE VALUE

The Virginia Townsite was surveyed as part of the work of the 1869 Northern Territory Survey Expedition, led by South Australian Surveyor-General GW Goyder. The expedition was responsible for locating and surveying a site for the capital city of the Northern Territory.

The Virginia Townsite was one of three subsidiary townsites surveyed to provide support and access to the interior of the Territory, alongside Daly and Southport. 'Virginia' was located about ten kilometres up the Elizabeth River, also known as the East Arm of Darwin Harbour. Only one allotment in the surveyed town was ever sold, and the town was never built. As a consequence the land has retained the bush state evident during the 1869 survey.

The Virginia Townsite contains at least 158 of the original ironwood survey markers and stone survey trenches constructed by members of the 1869 expedition. They have remained in place for over 150 years and are an excellent example of mid to late nineteenth century survey practices. When compared alongside modern day geographical positioning systems, the 1869 surveys are found to be extremely accurate.

The stone trenches and ironwood pegs are considered rare both as artefacts and because they remain in-situ and therefore reflect the survey plan on the ground. They represent a complete and relatively intact 1869 survey of a colonial town site, marking out residential allotments, roads, park lands and the town square. The survey markers represent the only known physical evidence in the Territory of a survey by Goyder and his team. As a surveyed colonial town site Virginia is rare at a national level.

The original mapping of the Virginia Townsite on the traditional lands of the Larrakia people, and its identification of places of Aboriginal occupation such as shell middens allows the rare opportunity in the Darwin area of acknowledging the role of survey work in appropriating Larrakia lands.

The Virginia Townsite is strongly associated with the work of GW Goyder and the 1869 NT Surveying Expedition. Goyder named many of the streets within the surveyed townsites after members of his survey team and the Hundred of Goyder was named after him.