

PLANNING AND ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE**7 JUNE 2023****3****CATALINA MEMORIAL PLAQUE - ESPLANADE**

Tim Dendle | 52/8/4-01 | #7188764

RECOMMENDATION:**That Council:**

- 1. Approves the installation of a memorial plinth and plaque on the Cairns Catalina Memorial located on the Esplanade Foreshore:**
- 2. Notes that the installation of the plaque is to be fully funded by the Royal Australian Air Force (RAAF); and**
- 3. Notes that the request is inconsistent with the Plaques, Memorials & Monuments General Policy however the proposal commemorates an event of significant historic importance and is worthy of acknowledgment.**

INTERESTED PARTIES:

History and Heritage Branch – Royal Australian Air Force (RAAF)
 Gori Granite and Marble – contractor
 Cairns RSL – supporting body

Note: The identification of interested parties is provided on a best endeavours basis by Council Officers and may not be exhaustive.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:

The history and heritage branch of the Royal Australian Air Force (RAAF) have requested Council approval for the installation of an additional marble plinth and commemorative plaque on the Catalina A24-64 Memorial at the Cairns Esplanade. The additional plaque is proposed to commemorate the crew of the A24-64 and will be unveiled at the Catalina Memorial at an event on June 11, 2023.

Given the proposal seeks to add additional context to the existing memorial structure and is to be located on a space that was planned for future commemorations of this nature, officers are recommending Council approval be granted on this occasion.

BACKGROUND:

Requests are regularly received by Council from individuals and organisations seeking permission to place memorials, plaques, and monuments in open spaces. These areas are an important community resource and memorials, monuments and plaques need to be carefully considered to ensure they do not impact negatively on these spaces.

Council's recently adopted policy provides the following principles and provisions for acknowledgements, memorials or monuments within public spaces:

1. All requests will be managed in a compassionate manner.
2. Proposals do not result in particular locations reaching saturation point or interfere with the intended purpose of the region's parks, gardens, facilities, open spaces or reserves;
3. There is no negative impact on future land use planning or maintenance expenditure of Council;
4. Council operations and community access should be able to occur in a safe, secure and efficient manner; and
5. Adverse impacts to the surrounding environment, businesses and residents are mitigated.

The existing monument and the proposed additional features aim to commemorate historically significant events in our regions history.

On 13 December 1944, Catalina A24-64 was part of a formation of 24 aircraft, each flying independently on a different route to mine Manila Bay in the Philippines. The A24-64 planned to fly via the west coast of Mindoro Island, then north across the mountains to the western shore of Manila Bay, then returning over the southern shore of the Manila Bay. Weather in the area was reported as good and the crash was not witnessed; the details are therefore unknown.

All nine crewmembers were lost with Catalina A24-64. Subsequent searches of the area failed to find any evidence of the aircraft or determine the fate of the crew.

The Catalina memorial on the Esplanade was erected in 1976 as a recognition of the role of the Catalinas and their brave pilots.

In 2015, the wreckage of an aircraft was reported in mountainous terrain on the northwest of Mindoro Island. In March 2019, a reconnaissance mission to the site was conducted to search for additional evidence to support an aircraft identification. Additional wreckage was recovered; however, no human remains were identified at the site. Following investigations and additional research in Australia, the crashed aircraft was identified as 43SQN Catalina A24-64. This information has been provided directly from Grant Kelly GPCAPT 0-6 Reservist Historic Unrecovered War Casualties – Air Force FBN3-GF-103 History and Heritage Branch.

In 2016, a memorial service was held, and a commemorative plaque laid to mark the 11 crew who died when a RAAF Catalina crashed 56km off the coast of Cairns on 28 February 1943.

COMMENT:

The proposal to install a new plaque on the existing memorial was part of a broader application to host a memorial event on site on 11 June 2023. The new plaque will look to specifically focus on the crew of the A24-64. Refer **Attachments 1 and 2**.

Council's Policy looks to ensure acknowledgements, memorials and monuments within public open space (particularly on the Cairns Esplanade) are carefully considered.

Following assessment by Council officers, it has been determined that whilst a new installation, the proposal aligns with the overarching principals of the policy and the commemoration is for an event that is hugely significant for our region.

A search has determined that there are no further approvals required and the proposal has the support of the local RSL subbranch as per the letter of support in **Attachment 3**.

OPTIONS:

Option 1 (recommended):

That Council:

1. Approves the installation of a memorial plinth and plaque on the Cairns Catalina Memorial located on the Esplanade Foreshore:
2. Notes that the installation of the plaque is to be fully funded by the Royal Australian Air Force (RAAF); and
3. Notes that the request is inconsistent with the Plaques, Memorials & Monuments General Policy however the proposal commemorates an event of significant historic importance and is worthy of acknowledgment.

Option 2:

That Council does not approve the placement of a Commemorative Plaque at on the Catalina Memorial, Esplanade Foreshore and recommends an alternate course of action.

CONSIDERATIONS:

Risk Management:

The nature of the undertaking is consistent with the existing memorial intent and on the existing memorial structure. No additional structures are being constructed and no further approvals are necessary.

Council Finance and the Local Economy:

The installation of the plaque will be completed and funded by the RAAF. Local contractors have been engaged by the RAAF to create and install the granite plaque on the existing monument. Ongoing maintenance of the memorial has been and will continue to be completed by Cairns Regional Council.

Community and Cultural Heritage:

The discovery of No 43 Squadron (43SQN) Catalina A24-64 is important for our nation and demonstrates our ongoing commitment to search for, identify and, where possible, recover our missing service personnel from past conflicts, regardless of the passage of time. Currently, 3125 service personnel from the Second World War (WWII), and 18 service personnel from Korea, are missing with no known grave. Of more importance is for their families to know the location of their final resting place, in the hope that this knowledge may give some comfort after such a long time.

Corporate and Operational Plans:

Corporate Plan 2021-2026 – Focus Four: Community and Culture.

Policy:

Acknowledgement, Memorials or Monuments General Policy.

CONSULTATION:

The RAAF have obtained a letter of support from RSL.

ATTACHMENTS:

Attachment 1: Catalina Memorial – Location Map

Attachment 2: Photo of the monument with proposed location of new plaque and Aerial map.

Attachment 3: RSL Letter of support



Tim Dendle
Executive Manager – Community Spaces

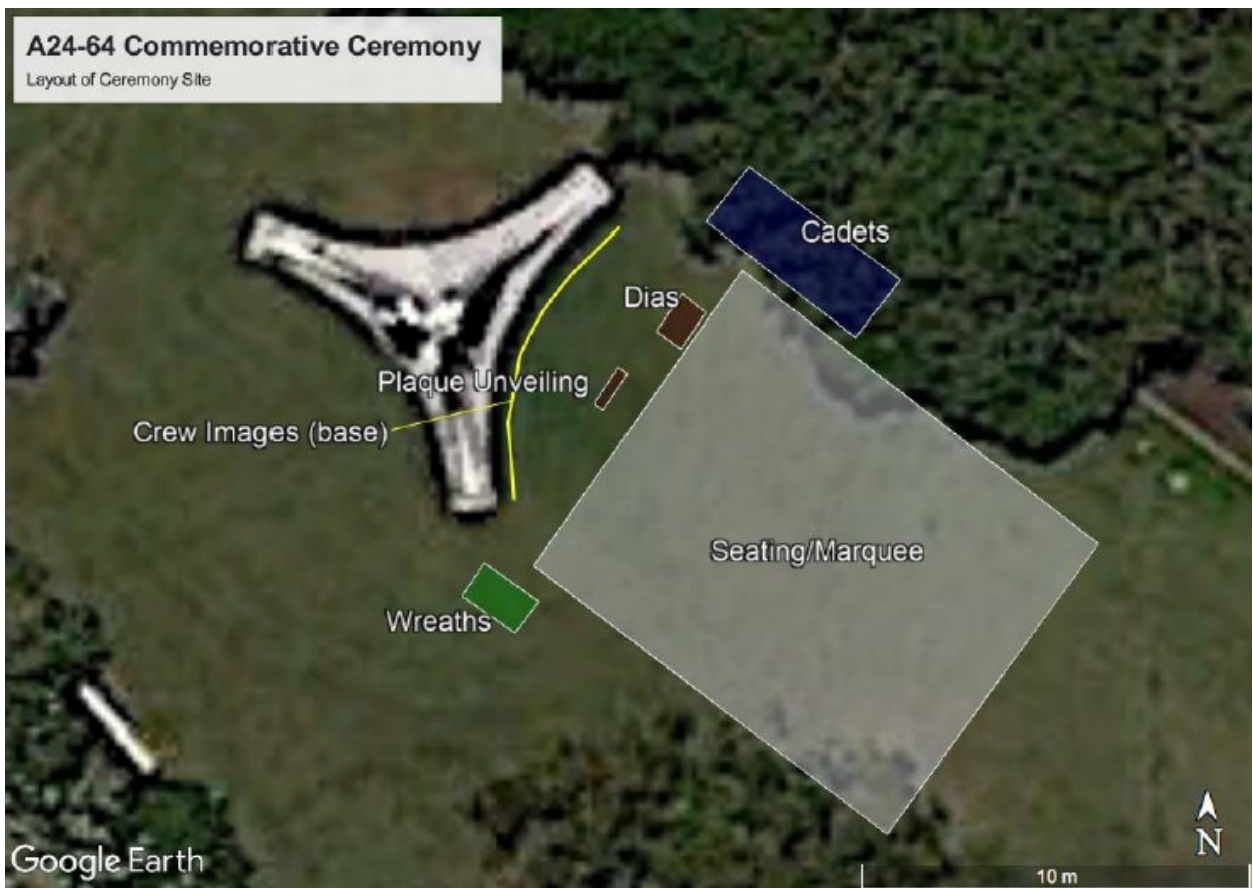


Destry Puia
Director, Lifestyle & Community

Attachment 1: Catalina Memorial – Location Map



Attachment 2 - Photo of the monument with proposed location event plan:



Attachment 3: RSL Letter of Support



13 March 2023

Mayor Bob Manning
Cairns Regional Council
Spence Street
Cairns QLD 4870

Dear Mayor Manning,

The Cairns RSL Sub Branch supports the upgrade of the Catalina Memorial as outlined in the Historic Unrecovered War Casualties – Air Force History and Heritage Branch (AFHQ) Submission to Council for approval to undertake the upgrade.

We understand the scope of the works to include:

1. A new bronze plaque is to be installed on the memorial, on a new black granite plinth on the southern 'leg' of the memorial which features the memorial plaque to A24-25; the new plaque will be on the reverse side to the existing A24-25 plaque.
2. Design of the new plaque and mounting to be entirely consistent with the existing arrangement utilised for the plaques for A24-25 and A24-50 to maintain uniformity across the memorial.

We commend the efforts of the AFHQ in their commitment to ensuring that the Catalina Commemorative Memorial is maintained and enhanced.

Please do not hesitate to contact me if you require any further information on the project.

Best regards

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads 'Nathan Shingles'.

Mr. Nathan Shingles
President
Cairns RSL Sub Branch

Caring For Our Defence Family

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