

## New museum for Darwin

THE Northern Territory's involvement in World War II will be preserved and commemorated at a new museum to be built at East Point in Darwin.

Construction company TCS Pty Ltd will design and build the \$11 million World War II Defence of Darwin Museum, which will be located next to the existing East Point Military Museum.

The historical significance of Darwin's bombing and the Territory's role in World War II is of immense importance to Territorians. This new museum will ensure that history is preserved for locals and tourists for generations to come.

Once complete, this will be a world-class museum where visitors can see first-hand the sacrifice our local Diggers made for our country.

Construction is expected to start in June and be complete in early 2012 to coincide with the 70th anniversary of the Bombing of Darwin.



Willie Allen ... sporting and war hero

# The brave 400

MORE than 400 Indigenous Australians volunteered for service during World War I.

Larrakia man Willie Allen served with the Australian Imperial Force as a member of the 11th Light Horse Regiment.

Trooper Willie Allen worked as a labourer before the war, and was something of a local sporting hero, having won trophies as a champion cricketer and rifle shooting.

He also played Australian Rules Football for the Waratahs. Prior to enlisting with the AIF in 1917, Trooper Allen served for three years with the Darwin Cable Guard, tasked with protecting the vital telecommunications cable that was considered a target.

Trooper Allen was one of 23 volunteers to be farewelled from Darwin by

the Mayor of Darwin and the Administrator of the Northern Territory on 20 December 1917, just 10 days after he enlisted.

While with the AIF, Trooper Allen saw service in the Middle East, in locations that included Cairo and Tripoli. This picture was taken in a Cairo studio.

Trooper Allen's niece Mary Raymond said that when he returned to Darwin, he gave his sister (Mary's mother) a photograph of himself in uniform.

'He was wearing a big army hat, it was beautiful,' said Mary. 'Unfortunately we lost that picture in Cyclone Tracy.'

Trooper Allen returned from war in 1919 and after being discharged from the AIF, settled in Queensland with his wife and family. He received the British War Medal, the Victory Medal and the 1914-15 Star.



Leading aircraftman Percy Leslie Westcott with Gunner, his canine air-raid early warning system. Image courtesy of the Australian War Memorial

## Rescued puppy warned of raids

A STRAY kelpie will be remembered for his heroic efforts to save Darwin from further bombings and an invasion.

The six-month-old puppy, later named Gunner, was found wounded under a hut at Darwin Air Force base on February 19, 1942, after the first wave of Japanese bombs.

He was taken in by Air Force members to recover from his broken leg.

During this time he was observed by his handler for accurately responding to and alerting diggers that Japanese aircraft were approaching Darwin.

Gunner helped alert soldiers of Japanese aircraft approaching Darwin 20 minutes to a couple of hours before being seen in Darwin skies.

Gunner's handler, Leading Aircraftman Percy Leslie Westcott, was given a portable air raid siren and was granted permission to sound the alarm if Gunner reacted to approaching planes.

Gunner's hearing was so acute that he was able

to differentiate allied aircraft from enemy aircraft.

History shows that animals have played an important role in wars and conflict.

Cavalry horses were used to charge the enemy, pigeons carried messages from the frontline back to headquarters and mules and donkeys transported weapons and supplies.

Dogs have always had a special place in human affairs. They have been trained to track enemies, to sniff for weapons and explosives, used as patrol or messenger dogs and, as in Gunner's case, respond to their sonic hearing.

During World War I, dogs were even taught to be ambulance assistants, carrying medical supplies and bandages to the wounded, as this French postcard shows from 1914.

Sixty-nine years after the bombing of Darwin, Darwin remembers the fallen and the efforts of our canine hero, Gunner.

# THE DARK DAYS

By TOM LEWIS  
Director, Darwin Military Museum

THE Northern Territory, despite its isolation and small population, stood up for king and country during World War I.

Territorians volunteered for armed service to such a degree that the Territory was left with a labour shortage.

Two hundred and twenty men joined the Cable Corps in Darwin - their purpose was to defend the vital cable link to overseas.

Two hundred and eighty eight men enlisted for overseas service, many to the Light Horse, but the majority with the infantry.

By the end of the war, about 40 per cent of the Territory's men enlisted from a population of a few thousand settlers an inspiring achievement.

One of the Territory soldiers was Albert Borella, who won the Victoria Cross for bravery.

A camp cook for a line party working out of Tennant Creek telegraph station, Borella rode



Diggers on parade in Darwin during the Second World War II