Saving the Sandfly

The Northern Territory Government has committed almost $40 000 to save the Sandfly.

Heritage Minister, Len Kiely said the locomotive is an important part of the Territory’s history.

“The Sandfly played a crucial role in building the Territory and defending Australia during the Second World War and deserves to be Heritage listed and preserved,” said Mr Kiely.

“During the War people in Darwin relied on the Sandfly to deliver crucial supplies.

“Later, after the port and railway sustained damage in the Japanese attacks on Darwin the Sandfly went south and continued to help the military in Katherine.

“It was dubbed the Sandfly early on because like its namesake the small locomotive travelled all day to and from the port area near the mangroves.

“Apart from providing assistance in the Second World War the Sandfly was also vital in the construction of the North Australia Railway (NAR).

“For many years the role of the Sandfly was to shunt wagons of railway construction material between the jetty and yards, helping to put the track into place.

“It operated on the NAR between 1887 and 1958 making it the longest serving locomotive to operate on the NAR,” said Mr Kiely.

On its retirement the Territory lost the Sandfly to South Australia before it was returned to Darwin in 2005 to take pride of place on Darwin Wharf where it spent most of its working life.

Mr Kiely said Heritage Listing the locomotive will ensure it receives the funding to keep it in pristine condition.
“After its removal from the wharf $30 000 of repairs will be carried out and we will then find the Sandfly a safe permanent home.

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