Media Release

Adam Giles  
Chief Minister of the Northern Territory

Lia Finocchiaro  
Parliamentary Secretary

Marking our wartime history on the eve of the ANZAC Centenary

24 April 2015

Today seven WWI veterans buried in unmarked graves at Gardens Road Cemetery have finally had their service commemorated with headstones and plaques.

“On the eve of the Gallipoli Centenary, I am proud we are able to give these forgotten soldiers the memorials they deserve,” Chief Minister Adam Giles said.

“It is a fitting way to pay tribute to the enormous sacrifices made by men and women in war over the past century.”

The servicemen commemorated with a new headstone are Larrakia man Robert Shepherd, Thomas Cody, Tom Cumming, George Elmer, Eric Erlandson, John McMillan and John Newton.

The group includes a Military Medal recipient for gallantry and devotion to duty, a Queen’s South Africa Medal recipient, two members of the Light Horse regiment, a buffalo shooter and a lightweight boxer.

These men all made it home from World War I. When they died between 1924 and 1951, some received a military funeral but their graves were never marked,” Parliamentary Secretary Lia Finocchiaro said.

“We have now corrected this oversight ensuring their chapters in our war time past aren’t lost for future generations of Territorians.”

Today’s unveiling was a moving occasion for the surviving relatives of the returned servicemen.

“The family is really ecstatic because it’s been an unmarked grave for so long, and to be recognised is really special,’ Ruth Logan granddaughter of Eric Erlandson said.

For many of the relatives, it’s been a long journey to get recognition for their loved ones.
“It fills me with great pride to know that finally my grandfather Robert Shepherd has received a head stone recognising him as a Veteran who enlisted as a Larrakia man to serve in World War I,” Bill Risk said.

“The placing of his head stone recognising his service will come as a great surprise to many members of the Shepherd family as his service history wasn’t widely known.

“The Shepherd family would like to thank the NT Government for their contribution of his head stone as part of the commemoration of the brave men and women who enlisted and served in the Great War of 1914 to 1918.”

The headstones were paid for by the Northern Territory Government as part of its four year, $4.5 million program of events and commemorations for the ANZAC Centenary.

The City of Darwin has provided significant in-kind support to this project, preparing and laying the headstones.

A booklet detailing the men’s service history is attached.

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War Graves Booklet