Lone grave of Afghan pioneer wins heritage protection

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The lone grave of one of Alice Springs’ most celebrated Afghan pioneers has been granted legal protection by the Territory Government.

Minister for Lands and Planning David Tollner has heritage-listed the final resting place of Goolam Rasool Nazar – a camelman and hawker who fought a legal battle to win the right to own land in Alice Springs.

“Goolam Rasool Nazar’s life tells a fascinating story about what life was like for the many Afghans who left their homeland to help settle the Red Centre,” Mr Tollner said.

“After arriving in Australia in the 1880s he carted wool by camel and then prospered as a hawker.

“But when he tried to buy land of his own in Alice Springs he was told to move out of town and live with other Afghans.

“He hired Adelaide lawyers to take his case to the government and won his appeal.

“Sadly, only a few months after winning his case he died, but he was allowed to be buried in the town that had become his home.”

Greatorex MLA Matt Conlan said he had pressed for the heritage listing and was pleased to see the grave being recognised at long last.

“It’s terrific to see this site receive the recognition it deserves and I thank the Minister for it,” Mr Conlan said.

“Goolam’s grave lies in a very special part of Alice Springs between the Golf Course and Olive Pink Botanic Gardens and is a significant part of the history of Central Australia.”

Goolam Rasool Nazar was 80 when he died of a heart attack. He was buried on land that now forms an easement off Tuncks Road.
His grave lies on a north-south axis, according to Islamic tradition, and is the only known lone Afghan grave in Alice Springs.

His countrymen were later buried in a special section of the general cemetery on Memorial Drive.

Nearby residents have cared for the grave since the 1930s, but it is hoped a more formal arrangement for tending the site will soon be secured.

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