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Leprosarium story to be remembered

An important piece of the Northern Territory’s cultural history will finally be recognised through the construction of a commemorative memorial, Minister for Environment and Heritage Marion Scrymgour said today.

Ms Scrymgour told Parliament today that she has a personal commitment to preserving the story of the East Arm Leprosarium, and is excited to announce the allocation of land for a plaque and monument to be established at the site’s entrance.

“As a child I regularly visited the Leprosarium with my mother, watching as she trained and worked,” Ms Scrymgour said.

“My mother was one of many who worked with dedicated health professionals as well as church and community workers who worked - with Dr J C Hardgrave - to greatly improve both the physical and social well being of the patients.”

The Leprosarium was established at East Arm in 1955 to provide accommodation and treatment facilities for leprosy patients who had previously lived on Channel Island.

Ms Scrymgour said by the mid 90s no maintenance was being carried out and some buildings deemed dangerous because of termite damage were demolished - with the last remnants of the Leprosarium removes in 2001.

“Concern has been expressed that the heritage values of the East Arm Leprosarium have never been recognised,” Ms Scrymgour said.

“While there is little physically left to remind us of the story of those that suffered from this terrible disease and the courage and dedication of those that helped them, steps are now being taken to ensure the site receives recognition.”

Ms Scrymgour said interpretive signage will be introduced into a viewing platform overlooking the site, as well as the establishment of a plaque and monument at the entrance of the old Leprosarium site.

“I am committed to ensuring that the story of the East Arm Leprosarium is not lost and the interpretive works and allocation of land for a memorial will ensure that the history is passed on for generations to come.”

The plaque and memorial will be ready for unveiling in the middle of the year.

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