

CAPE DON LIGHTHOUSE COMPLEX

Updated: 4th March, 2002



Cape Don Lighthouse Complex

Situated on the Cobourg Peninsula, the Cape Don Lighthouse Complex, consisting of the lighthouse, three residences and ancillary buildings, formed the first manned lighthouse complex in the Northern Territory. It was built by the Commonwealth Lighthouse Service between 1915 and 1920. The light first began operating on 15 September 1917.

The construction of the Lighthouse Complex over such a lengthy period is a reflection on its remote location and the supply difficulties encountered at that time. For example, the lighthouse itself took 10 men 21 months to build as the work could only be done in the dry season and materials had to be hauled along a 3 mile rail line with horses.

The lighthouse is an early example of a reinforced concrete tower construction as opposed to the then generally used blockhouse form. Concrete towers did not become common until after 1960.

The lighthouse complex was associated with increased shipping into Darwin during the First World War. A radar station was located near the complex in the Second World War. The lighthouse was manned until July 1983 when it was switched to an automated system.

Meteorological records were maintained when the lighthouse was manned. It is acknowledged by the Meteorological Bureau that these records were amongst the longest and best maintained records kept within the Northern Territory. Observations were well placed to assist in cyclone development and tracking.

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