

Media Release:

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Historic WWII Propeller

A historic plane propeller belonging to a World War II shipwreck that was discovered by two local fishermen will be returned to its final resting place at the bottom of the sea this Sunday 29 June 2008.

Greg Miller and Gavin Newman were fishing in close vicinity of the *Mauna Loa* shipwreck and accidentally raised a historic propeller that had become caught on their anchor.

Northern Territory Heritage Officer David Steinberg said that after diving the location where the propeller was found, he was able to confirm it as part of the *Mauna Loa* shipwreck.

"The *Mauna Loa* was a 5436 ton US transport vessel that was set ablaze and sunk by Japanese aircraft on 19 February 1942," Mr Steinberg said.

"It is one of the six WWII shipwrecks in Darwin Harbour on the NT Heritage Register, and the shipwreck and associated artefacts are all protected under the *Heritage Conservation Act 1991*.

"We sincerely thank Mr Miller and Mr Newman for their cooperation in handing it over to the Heritage Branch so that we can return it from where it came."

Mr Steinberg said that together with Mr Miller and Mr Newman, they will return the propeller back to where it was found.

"The propeller is currently lying in saltwater to reduce degradation and will be tagged to indicate to future archaeologists that the artefact had been removed and returned," Mr Steinberg said.

"The propeller will also carry a tag to acknowledge that Mr Miller and Mr Newman discovered it, making it into a kind of 'underwater trophy' for them and a great story to tell the grandkids.

"Darwin Harbour features a rich and diverse maritime history with the highest concentration of WWII ship and aircraft sites in Australia.

"The remains of these shipwrecks are important because they serve as memorials to those who lost their lives defending Darwin in the first bombing raid on Australian soil, as well as being historic examples of the type of vessels and equipment used for defence in WWII.

"We encourage members of the public to report possible historic sites and objects found in the Territory to the Heritage Branch so that long term conservation and management strategies can be implemented."

For more information about WWII Shipwrecks, the *Mauna Loa* or to view the NT Heritage Register go to www.nt.gov.au/heritage.

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Media Note – for more information contact David Steinberg on 8999 5532

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