30 June, 2010

**SHEPHERDS HILL MILITARY SITE STATE HERITAGE LISTED**

The Shepherds Hill military fortifications, which co-ordinated Newcastle’s various coastal defences during World War II, have been given the State’s highest level of heritage protection.

Minister for Planning, Tony Kelly, said the various elements of the Shepherds Hill installations, including gun emplacements and pits and a 100m-long tunnel and observation posts have been placed on the State Heritage Register.

“Military occupation of the Shepherds Hill site began in the 1890s, in case of an attack by Russia, with the construction of a gun emplacement with underground rooms,” Mr Kelly said.

“The gun was designed to be a discrete, hard-to-spot weapon which would contract downwards, below its parapet to be reloaded.

“It remains the only unmodified eight-inch disappearing gun emplacement of its type in NSW.

“As part of the strengthening of the defence system of Newcastle, various new projects were undertaken at Shepherds Hill during World War II.

“This included troop accommodation, installation of searchlights and a 100 metre-long tunnel which carried the cables from the engine room for one of the searchlights 60 metres above sea level.”

Minister for Hunter, Jodi McKay, said these works were to defend Newcastle, which was of growing importance as a shipping and industrial hub, and production site for explosive artillery shells.

“The gun batteries at Shepherds Hill formed an integrated system with the batteries at Fort Scratchley, Fort Wallace at Stockton and Tomaree Head overlooking Port Stephens. Shepherds Hill had the role of co-ordinating these defences,” Ms McKay said.

“Furthermore, Shepherds Hill is possibly unique in Australia because, during World War II, it was simultaneously manned by the Navy, Army and Air Force for a variety of functions.”

The listing means:

- Any major works for the installations would be subject to decisions or advice from the Heritage Council of NSW as well as Newcastle City Council;
- Will now have increased access to State Government heritage funding; and
- Must be maintained to certain standards of repair.