

Maritime Museums of Australia Project Support Scheme 2013/14

Krawarree Project Inc. – Ambulance Launch AH 1733 *Krawarree*

Vessel Management Plan, Assessment of Significance and Project

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Krawarree at the Heritage Park

Background

The World War II built Army Ambulance Launch AH1733 *Krawarree* is under restoration near Southport in Queensland. Krawarree Project Inc. was awarded in kind support by MMAPSS in 2013/14. This support was for ANMM curator David Payne to visit, assess the project and provide assistance with the development of a Vessel Management Plan for *Krawarree*. The meeting at the vessel was with John Freeman from Krawaree Project Inc.

Summary

AH1733 *Krawarree* is an important example of a World War II Army vessel. It is in a secure location and in the early stages of restoration. The proposed development of a Vessel Management Plan will coordinate the ongoing restoration and rebuilding work and assist with funding applications.

Significance

AH 1733 *Krawarree* is an 80 foot Ambulance Launch built in Tasmania between 1943 to 1945, and intended for service in World War II. It is the only surviving example of five such craft that were all built in Tasmania, and remains in its original configuration.

The Ambulance Launches built in Tasmania were made by either Purdon and Featherstone in Hobart who made three, or EA 'Ned' Jack in Launceston who made two. Neither firm kept exact records to confirm who built the craft which were numbered AH 1730-1734. However an undated historic image of *Krawarree* AH 1733 shows it undergoing trials on the Derwent River, suggesting it was built by Purdon and Featherstone. All five craft were fitted out with their equipment in Williamstown, Victoria.

The 24.38 metre long craft were adapted from the 80 Ft HDML hull design, with a raised aft deck over the rear third of the hull to give headroom and space for stretchers. They were fitted out with 33 stretcher berths, 30 in the main ward and three in a special ward. The craft had wooden double diagonal planked hulls and were powered by 2 Hercules diesel engines, giving a cruising speed of 12 knots, and a top speed of 16 knots. They were lightly armed for defence with one 20mm machine gun, and two Vickers 303 inch guns.

The building process was slow and held up by the lack of suitable engines. Of the eight originally ordered around the end of 1943, only five were completed. The first three saw service late in the war in the PNG area. It is thought *Krawarree* may not have seen active service as the log books held in National Archives Canberra begin in August 22 1945.

The craft also had the capacity to be modified as a headquarters for senior commanders, and AH 1734 *Kurunda* was noted as being used as a command craft after the end of the war in September 1945.

Krawarree's history after 1945 is not well documented. It became a recreational vessel at an unknown date, and was once called *Evita*. Only two recent owners are known. In 2014 it belongs to the Krawarree Project Inc, who are working on restoration of the craft at a Heritage Park near Coomera, in Queensland.

Location

The vessel is in the grounds of the Pimpana Heritage Park, Pimpana Qld, adjacent to Coomera on the Gold Coast. It is not in a building and is not under a cover. The hull is well supported and the vessel is level, with a sturdy stair access. The park is locked and opened to the public on weekends and other times for special occasions. The park is shared by other heritage groups with steam and motor powered vehicles and machinery.

The vessel was originally in the water at Sanctuary Cove, Southport, but was moved from Southport in 2013 where it was in danger of being neglected and vandalised. Discussions are underway about a further move to the nearby Coomera waterfront.

Condition

The vessel is generally in fair condition; however some specific parts, such as areas of the deck are in poor condition. There is no machinery installed. A considerable amount of original hull and superstructure material remains extant, but details of this need attention to stabilize and stop further deterioration.

Assessment

It is an early stage of restoration and the volunteers are making progress on stabilising any areas of concern and are cleaning the interior of the craft. Items and fit out identified as incorrectly rebuilt earlier (eg the surrounds of the aft hatch) or not associated with the vessel's army use, will be removed. Storage is being organised for vulnerable items that can be reinstalled at a later date.

The principal outcome of the meeting was a detailed discussion of a Vessel Management Plan which will then provide them with a coordinated approach to the restoration work required. The agreed outcome is to return the vessel to its WWII Army Ambulance Launch arrangement as this was its principle significance. The VMP will be developed over May 2014. D Payne will assist specifically with Section 2 Significance, and will also review the overall document prepared by Krawarree Project Inc.



Aft cabin- original hull structure but missing fitout to be replaced



Test panel for removing exterior sheathing



Foredeck- gun'prop' to be removed and replaced with authentic item.

Recommendation

Krawarree is a rare example of an Army vessel from World War II and the only surviving Army Ambulance Launch from this period, and is a suitable vessel for restoration. The condition of the hull is fair but with appropriate work and a final, under cover location it can be returned to good condition, and will be strong enough to support the fitout of missing items to recreate the correct interior and arrangement.

The proposed Vessel Management Plan will provide a coordinated plan for future work, and will assist in obtaining support funding or in kind support from grants or other sources.