PRESERVATION OF MARY MACKILLOP’S ORIGINAL GRAVE SITE

A licence agreement has been signed today to restore and maintain Gore Hill Cemetery, which contains the original grave site of Mary MacKillop.

Minister for Lands, Tony Kelly, said the canonisation of Mary MacKillop in Rome on October 17, announced by Pope Benedict XVI, has helped deliver this new agreement.

“It is a little known fact Mary MacKillop was originally buried in the Catholic section at Gore Hill Cemetery in 1909 – a dedicated Crown Reserve Cemetery,” the Minister said.

“With the faithful’s devotion to her life and memory, it was decided five years later to move her remains to their present location at the Mary MacKillop Memorial Chapel at North Sydney.

“However, her original grave is an important historic site and this new agreement will enable the injection of funds to help maintain and preserve it and the surrounding cemetery for generations to come.

“This agreement helps unlock funds normally reserved only for operational Crown cemeteries, so they can be used in the restoration process at Gore Hill which had its last burial in 1974.”

Mr Kelly signed the licence agreement with the Chairman of the Catholic Cemeteries Board, Peter Ward, in the presence of representatives of the Gore Hill Memorial Cemetery Trust and the Sisters of St Joseph, and Michael Moore from the Sydney Catholic Archdiocese, representing His Eminence, Cardinal George Pell.

Mr Ward said the Catholic Cemeteries Board (CCB) will now undertake the important restoration and conservation works in consultation with the Gore Hill Memorial Cemetery Trust.

“The CCB has been requested by his Eminence Cardinal George Pell to ensure significant sites, like Mary MacKillop’s original grave site, are secure and preserved,” Mr Ward said.

“It makes sense for the CCB to take on this licence over Gore Hill Cemetery to better maintain this significant cemetery and improve access to the public.

“The program of works will be undertaken in keeping with the heritage significance of the cemetery and will ensure a professional management of this important heritage asset for NSW.”

The Catholic Cemeteries Board was established by Cardinal Clancy in 1996, however its predecessor has been managing cemeteries since 1867.

Gore Hill Memorial Cemetery was established as a historic site in 1986 under the Gore Hill Memorial Cemetery Act and was given State Heritage Status in 2001.