24 March, 2010

$20,000 FOR RESTORATION OF BOXING LEGEND’S GRAVE

The NSW Government has allocated $20,000 towards the restoration of Australian boxing legend Les Darcy’s grave site.

Minister for Lands, Tony Kelly, said the grave, located in the Crown reserve cemetery at East Maitland, is of national significance.

“Les Darcy was one of our greatest sportsman, and one of Maitland’s finest sons, and we need to ensure this memorial to him and his career is preserved for generations to come,” the Minister said.

“It’s fitting that even 92 years after his death locals people and admirers of this sporting legend can come together to ensure the restoration of his grave site.”

The funding has been allocated from the Public Reserves Management Fund, with a matching contribution from the Heritage Branch of NSW.

Member for Maitland, Frank Terenzini, welcomed the announcement.

“This funding, combined with money already raised, will fast track the restoration work,” Mr Terenzini said.

Les Darcy was born at Stradbroke on the Paterson River on 31 October, 1895, the second son of 10 surviving children of a local share farmer. He grew up in Oakhampton and took up boxing when he was 14.

By the age of 20 he was the welterweight, middleweight and heavyweight champion of Australia and was one of, if not the best know sportsman in the country.

The First World War halted his meteoric rise and, after being caught up in the conscription debate, Darcy left Australia as a stowaway, eventually making it to the United States in late 1916.

After a number of proposed fights were banned in the United States, Darcy’s health deteriorated, and he eventually developed pneumonia and died on the 24 May, 1917, aged just 21.

His body was brought back to Australia after funeral processions in Memphis and San Francisco.

Darcy was finally farewelled at a large procession in Sydney before being buried at East Maitland, where the monument over his grave was erected thanks to the efforts of local friends and supporters.