

Australian Capital Territory

Heritage (Decision about Registration of Onyong's Grave Site, Tharwa, Paddys River) Notice 2015

Notifiable Instrument NI2015—256

made under the

Heritage Act 2004, s40 Notice of decision about registration

1 Revocation

This instrument replaces NI2015—71.

2 Name of instrument

This instrument is the *Heritage (Decision about Registration of Onyong's Grave Site, Tharwa, Paddys River) Notice 2015*.

3 Registration details of the place

Registration details of the place are at [Attachment A](#): Register entry for Onyong's Grave Site, Tharwa, Paddys River.

4 Reason for decision

The ACT Heritage Council has decided that Onyong's Grave Site, Tharwa, Paddys River meets one or more of the heritage significance criteria at s 10 of the *Heritage Act 2004*. The register entry is at [Attachment A](#).

5 Date of registration

4 June 2015

Pamela Hubert
A/g Secretary (as delegate for)
ACT Heritage Council
4 June 2015



ACT Heritage Council

**AUSTRALIAN CAPITAL TERRITORY
HERITAGE REGISTER
(Registration)**

For the purposes of s. 40 of the *Heritage Act 2004*, an entry to the heritage register has been prepared by the ACT Heritage Council for the following place:

Onyong's Grave Site

Block 4, Section 27, Tharwa, Paddys River

DATE OF REGISTRATION

4 June 2015 Notifiable Instrument: 2015–

Copies of the Register Entry are available for inspection at ACT Heritage. For further information please contact:

The Secretary
ACT Heritage Council
GPO Box 158
CANBERRA ACT 2601
Telephone 13 22 81

This statement refers to the location of Onyong's Grave Site as required in s. 12 (b) of the *Heritage Act 2004*.

LOCATION OF THE PLACE

Block 4, Section 27, Tharwa, Paddys River.

This section refers to the description of Onyong's Grave Site as required in s.12(c) of the *Heritage Act 2004*.

DESCRIPTION OF THE PLACE

Onyong's Grave Site consisting of the following attributes:

The location of Onyong's burial is historically described as on the top of a rocky hill about a quarter of a mile from Tharwa bridge. However, the exact location of Onyong's burial on the hill is no longer clear. Nonetheless, due to the importance of Onyong as a historical figure and the association of the hill with his burial, the hill as a whole is important to the Aboriginal people of the ACT and region. Therefore the boundary of Block 4, Section 27, which includes this hill, is the site boundary for this registration.

This statement refers to the heritage significance of Onyong's Grave Site as required in s.12(d) of the *Heritage Act 2004*.

STATEMENT OF HERITAGE SIGNIFICANCE

Onyong was a prominent figure in the history of the ACT with regards to the era of contact between Aboriginal people and European settlers, and is also held in high regard for his importance as an Aboriginal leader.

Onyong's Grave Site represents Aboriginal burial practices that are no longer practiced in the ACT. Historical reports relating to the site from early European settlers who witnessed his burial are the only detailed written account of the burial of an important Aboriginal figure in the ACT. It is important to the Aboriginal people of the ACT as a cultural site representing burial practices that are no longer in use. The memory of Onyong endures in oral and written sources since the time of his death and the focus of that memory has been upon the hill location.
[criteria (a), (b), (g)]

The history of Onyong's Grave highlights early interaction between local Aboriginal groups and the incoming European settlers in the mid-19th century. It is important because it is the only Aboriginal burial for which there are detailed historical descriptions, and also represents the significant changes that were taking place in the lifestyles of the local Aboriginal people as a result of contact with European settlers. If subject to future investigations, it has potential to provide important new information on Onyong's life and death, and questions surrounding methods of Aboriginal burial. *[criterio (c) (h)]*

CONSERVATION OBJECTIVE

The guiding conservation objective is that Onyong's Grave Site shall be conserved and appropriately managed in a manner respecting its heritage significance.

The ACT Heritage Council may adopt heritage guidelines applicable to the place under s25 of the *Heritage Act 2004*.

For further information on guidelines applicable to the place, or for advice on proposed works or development, please contact ACT Heritage on 13 22 81.

REASON FOR REGISTRATION

Onyong's Grave Site, Tharwa, has been assessed against the heritage significance criteria and been found to have heritage significance when assessed against criteria [(a), (b), (c), (g), and (h)] under s.10 of the *Heritage Act 2004*.

ASSESSMENT AGAINST THE HERITAGE SIGNIFICANCE CRITERIA

The Council's assessment against the criteria specified in s.10 of the *Heritage Act 2004* is as follows.

In assessing the nomination for Onyong's Grave Site, Tharwa, the Council considered:

- the original nomination and documentary evidence supplied by the nominator; and
- the report by ACT Heritage titled, *Background Information, Onyong's Grave Site*, June 2015, containing photographs and information on history, description, condition and integrity.
- A site visit was not considered to be beneficial in contributing to the citation, however, should more information on the location of the burial be revealed, a site visit may be conducted in future.

Pursuant to s.10 of the *Heritage Act 2004*, a place or object has heritage significance if it satisfies one or more of the following criteria. Future research may alter the findings of this assessment.

(a) importance to the course or pattern of the ACT's cultural or natural history;

Onyong's Grave Site, Tharwa, meets this criterion.

The place bears a strong association with a well-known recording of the burial of a prominent Aboriginal figure, completed using methods that are no longer that practised in the ACT. Historical reports relating to the site from early European settlers who witnessed his burial are the only detailed written account of an Aboriginal burial in the ACT.

(b) has uncommon, rare or endangered aspects of the ACT's cultural or natural history;

Onyong's Grave Site, Tharwa, meets this criterion.

The place is associated with the only recording of a burial of an Aboriginal person or Aboriginal leader in the ACT, using burial methods that are no longer practiced, making the site uncommon, rare, and endangered.

(c) potential to yield information that will contribute to an understanding of the ACT's cultural or natural history;

Onyong's Grave Site, Tharwa, meets this criterion.

There is strong potential for the place to yield new information that will provide significant new information on Aboriginal burial practices in the ACT. Should additional material come to light in the event of archaeological investigation, it will also provide new information on the life and death of Onyong, and provide additional evidence surrounding this important figure to the

history of the ACT.

(d) importance in demonstrating the principal characteristics of a class of cultural or natural places or objects;

Onyong's Grave Site, Tharwa does not meet this criterion.

There is insufficient evidence before the Council at this time to assess whether the site demonstrates the principal characteristics of its class of place, because the exact location of Onyong's burial is unknown, and has not been examined.

(e) importance in exhibiting particular aesthetic characteristics valued by the ACT community or a cultural group in the ACT;

Onyong's Grave Site, Tharwa does not meet this criterion.

There is insufficient evidence before the Council at this time suggesting the Aboriginal community of the ACT values the place for its aesthetic characteristics to a significant degree.

(f) importance in demonstrating a high degree of creative or technical achievement for a particular period;

Onyong's Grave Site, Tharwa does not meet this criterion.

There is no evidence before the Council at this time to suggest that the place represents exceptionally fine application of techniques and approaches to an Aboriginal burial for the period, because the exact location of Onyong's burial is unknown, and physical evidence has not been examined.

(g) has a strong or special association with the ACT community, or a cultural group in the ACT for social, cultural or spiritual reasons;

Onyong's Grave Site, Tharwa, meets this criterion.

The site holds a special association to the Aboriginal people of the ACT as a cultural site representing burial methods that are no longer practised. The memory of Onyong has endured in oral and written sources since the time of his death and the focus of that memory has been upon the hill location.

(h) has a special association with the life or work of a person, or people, important to the history of the ACT.

Onyong's Grave Site, Tharwa, meets this criterion.

The history of Onyong's Grave Site is connected with early interaction between local Aboriginal groups and the incoming European settlers in the mid-19th century. Being the only Aboriginal burial for which there are detailed historical descriptions, it also represents the significant changes that were taking place in the lifestyles of the local Aboriginal people as a result of contact with European settlers.

Onyong was a prominent figure in the history of the ACT in the era of contact between Aboriginal people and European settlers, and is also held in high regard for his importance as an Aboriginal leader.

The story of Onyong's Grave site also has a special association with people important to the history of the ACT. Written accounts of Onyong's life, death, and persona, survive in diaries and accounts provided by W.D Wright of Lanyon, and T. A. Murray of Yarralumla, both large landowners and prominent figures, critical in shaping early European settlement of the ACT.

