



Quail Island Air Weapons Range Unexploded Ordnance (UXO) Hazard Reduction Project, Stage Two

Newsletter No. 9
Friday 16 November 2012

AN UPDATE FROM THE PROJECT MANAGER

The Department of Defence unexploded ordnance (UXO) hazard reduction operation at the former air weapons range on Quail and Bare Sand Islands has now been suspended with the onset of the wet season in the top end.

The operation, being undertaken by specialist UXO contractors, G-tek Australia Pty Limited, resulted in two potentially hazardous items being found, requiring Defence disposal assistance this year. The items, a 500 pound high explosive aerial bomb and a suspected high explosive 1,000 pound bomb, were demolished. Some four tonnes of scrap metal, principally practice bombs and fragments of high explosive bomb casings, were also cleared from the range during the season.

The larger bomb, having been subjected to an explosive demolition charge, was found to have been filled with an inert high explosive substitute compound. Such items were often used for bombing accuracy practice (see *photo right*).

Almost half of Quail Island has now been cleared, but some deeper items will need to be exposed using an excavator or a backhoe. Operations are planned to resume in April 2013.

I would like to thank members of the public for their cooperation with the project over the last two years. Operations have now been suspended due to seasonal weather patterns and simple recreational and social activities on the beach areas of the islands and in the surrounding waters pose little danger from UXO. However, I stress that our task is only partially complete and that it is highly probable that hazardous items remain on Bare Sand and Quail Island. I ask that anyone visiting the islands during the wet season does not go any further inland than the first dune and that there be no digging on the islands. Furthermore, I ask that if something is found that cannot be recognised, do not touch, tamper or disturb it in any way. Our contractors have removed some tonnes of rubbish from the islands during the operation, so please take your refuse with you when you leave!!

This will be the last newsletter for 2012 and as the festive season approaches, I would like to again thank all interested

parties for their cooperation and wish every one a happy and safe Christmas.

David Thomas
Project Manager



One of the recoveries this year was identified as a 1,000 pound high explosive aircraft bomb.



Fragments of the bomb after the disposal action. It was found to be filled with an inert explosive substitute.

Explosive demolition was attempted on the bomb in mid-November, after which it was found to contain a high explosive substitute – a non-explosive compound designed to give the bomb similar weight characteristics to an explosive-filled item. The resulting material will be removed from the island as part of the remediation operation.

