

Fire destroys Ghost Gum trees beloved by Aboriginal artist

January 4 2013



This photo, taken on January 3, 2013 and released to AFP with permission from the Northern Territory Government, shows the remains of Ghost Gum trees, painted many times by the late Aboriginal artist Albert Namatjira, after they were destroyed by a suspicious fire, some 16 km from the outback town of Alice Springs.

Two iconic Ghost Gum trees painted many times by famed Aboriginal

artist Albert Namatjira have been burnt down just as they were being considered for inclusion on a heritage register.

Northern Territory's Minister for Indigenous Advancement Alison Anderson said police believe arsonists set ablaze the trees, which stood 16 kilometres (10 miles) from the outback town of Alice Springs.

The December 30 fire had destroyed "a special place that has been visited by many since Albert Namatjira won international acclaim", she said.

"The Ghost Gums featured in many of his works and were easily accessible on the road to Hermannsburg, where he was born in 1902," the minister said.

"The twin Ghost Gums were a wonderful reminder of his connection to the land."

Anderson said it was only recently that the Northern Territory government had completed work around the trees to try to protect them from bush fires and allow as much moisture as possible to get to their roots.

The heritage branch of the Department of Lands, Planning and Environment had also requested a meeting with the traditional owners to discuss the future of the site.

The department said the ghost gums were being considered for inclusion on the heritage register at the time of their destruction.

Anderson said the [trees](#) were special not only to [Aboriginal people](#) but to those who loved the work of Namatjira, whose landscape paintings brought Outback [deserts](#) to colourful life.

"In his watercolours he brought the beauty of the Central Australian landscape to the world and helped make it a symbol of Australian identity," Anderson said.

Namatjira died in 1959 at the age of 57.

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