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Jellyfish may sink war art

By CLAYTON BENNETT

A SCULPTURE commemorating World War II may miss out on funding because Darwin council has already spent \$150,000 for a statue of a jellyfish.

The council has passed a motion in a confidential meeting to give the yearly art budget to a giant jellyfish installation at East Point.

But Darwin Military Museum director Tom Lewis

this week put forward a proposal for the World War II artwork — designed by war artist Bob McRae — to be built at East Point to tie in with the museum.

“We think the design that Bob McRae put together encapsulates everything that happened in that day by using several parts of action in the air, sea and on the land,” Mr Lewis said.

“(It would) highlight Darwin’s World War II experi-

ence and . . . many of the iconic people and the machines of the period.”

Darwin council community and cultural services manager John Banks said the council would have to discuss the other proposal with Mr Lewis — but the no decision had been made.

Mr Banks said the jellyfish statue, created by Territory artist Aly de Groot, impressed the council.

“It draws on the qualities

and attributes of Darwin,” he said. “There are elements to consider with public art, including if it is engineered correctly; the uniqueness of public art means you couldn’t just get it off a shelf.

He said one aspect of public art was that it was “inherently controversial”.

Mr Banks said the reason the artwork was discussed in confidence was to keep the proposals that were rejected private.

This was not the first time Darwin council has divided opinion with funding public art. In May, the council wanted to spend \$150,000 on an installation meant to represent the hull of the HMAS *Beagle* that many said looked like a cockroach laying on its back.

A 12m metal artwork — Stuart Spire — was to be built on the Esplanade in the early 2000s but Darwin council scrapped the idea after a backlash from the community.