

Progress on island burial ground

■ Kent Acott

Work has begun on the formal recognition of Australia's biggest unmarked burial ground.

About \$650,000 has been spent this year on the first stage of the improved management of Rottnest Island's burial ground — the final resting place of about 370 Aboriginal prisoners.

The work has involved demolishing encroaching structures, building a perimeter path and rammed-earth walls.

It has been done by the company Indigenous Economic Solutions using a workers who are male Noongar Whadjuks, the island's traditional custodians.

A new lease agreement for the Rottnest Lodge will allow authorities to step up bigger plans for the burial ground, including "reflection spaces" and Aboriginal sculptures.

The Lodge's Quod, the former jail where most of the Aboriginal prisoners died in miserable conditions, will cease to be used for tourist accommodation from May 2018.

Rottnest Island Authority chief executive Paolo Amaranti said stage one had shown how Aboriginal people could be involved in the management of this significant site.