



Hon Tony Kelly MLC
Minister for Planning
Minister for Infrastructure
Minister for Lands
Deputy Leader of the Government in the Legislative Council
Leader of the House in the Legislative Council

MEDIA RELEASE

13 December 2010

Shipwreck heritage program opens up to community involvement

Minister for Planning, Tony Kelly encouraged anybody with an interest in shipwrecks and underwater heritage to join the successful *Wreck Spotters* program on its tenth anniversary.

“The *Wreck Spotters* program allows volunteers to work alongside marine archaeologists in the identifying, mapping and promotion of shipwreck sites in their local community,” said Mr Kelly.

“The Department of Planning’s Heritage Branch which will also be offering training and resources to those interested in getting involved.”

“A program like this where the community can get involved, rather than just professional maritime archaeologists, will naturally increase the number of wrecks located and recorded.

Mr Kelly said people of all expertise and interest levels would be welcomed, with no limit on the number of willing volunteers able to participate.

“Shipwrecks tell us so many stories of the State’s rich maritime history – and in doing so provide a fascinating insight into our past,” Mr Kelly said.

“The need for their proper identification and handling has been underlined by two recent examples on the State’s north coast where important heritage items were inadvertently removed by members of the public.

“In October the stemson from a 120-year old wreck was moved from a beach at Hastings Point in the Tweed, and remains unlocated.

“And in November, an anchor from what could be a 140-year old wreck was removed from the Richmond River Spit near Ballina.

“Fortunately, the anchor has now been recovered and will take its place in the State’s maritime heritage.

“This program will not only facilitate public involvement in the location and recording of shipwrecks, it will also help raise public awareness of their historical value.”

The *Wreck Spotters* program provides volunteers with the chance to work alongside maritime archaeologists in identifying, mapping and promoting shipwreck sites in their local community.

“Some 1800 historic wrecks are known to lie in NSW coastal and inland waters, but to date only around 175 have been located and recorded,” Minister Kelly said.

“That’s a lot of shipwrecks out there waiting to be discovered and this program has a key role in the ongoing search for these intriguing and unique heritage items.



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“As we mark the tenth anniversary of this important program, the Government is targeting a big increase in public involvement from just 19 current participants to over 100.

“The State’s heritage belongs to all of us, and now everyone can play their part.”

All volunteers are being offered a 2-day internationally-recognised ‘Introduction to Maritime Archaeology Training Course’, accredited by the Australasian Institute for Maritime Archaeology and the Nautical Archaeology Society.

Recent examples of wrecks discovered under the program include the *ss Keilawarra* which was surveyed earlier this year by Dr Mark Spencer, after a team of volunteer recreational divers led by John Riley first located the wreck near the Solitary Islands off Coffs Harbour in 2000.

The *Keilawarra* was a 19th Century iron steamer and its loss in 1886 is described as one of the greatest peacetime maritime tragedies in the State’s history.

And last year, another wreck spotter Gwen Dundon reported some historic timbers washed up on Stockton Beach in Newcastle. These were recorded and are now used as part of the Heritage Branch’s teaching collection.

Anyone interested in joining the Wreck Spotters program, they should contact Heritage Branch Maritime Archaeologist, Sarah Ward on 02 9873 8533 or via email: sarah.ward@planning.nsw.gov.au.

Further information can also be found at www.maritime.heritage.nsw.gov.au