



Australian Government

**Department of Sustainability, Environment,
Water, Population and Communities**



Heritage places report card

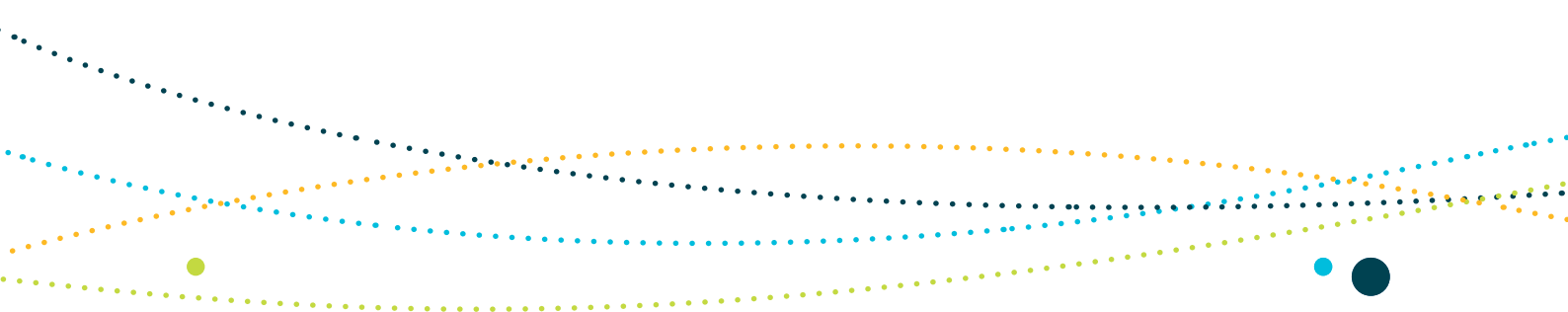
Supporting the draft marine bioregional
plan for the South-west Marine Region

prepared under the *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999*

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Report cards

The primary objective of the report cards is to provide accessible and up-to-date information on the conservation values found in Commonwealth marine regions. This information is maintained by the Department of Sustainability, Environment, Water, Population and Communities and is available online through the department's website (www.environment.gov.au).

Reflecting the categories of conservation values, there are three types of report cards:

- species group report cards
- marine environment report cards
- heritage places report cards.

Heritage places report cards

The heritage places report card provides spatial and contextual information in regard to matters protected for their natural, cultural, historical and Indigenous heritage values. In the marine environment these include historic shipwrecks, which are protected for the important place they play in Australia's heritage. The report card also assesses and reports on the potential vulnerabilities and pressures affecting heritage places and shipwrecks, and outlines protection measures in place.

1. Heritage places of the South-west Marine Region

This report card focuses on features and places of the South-west Marine Region that are recognised and protected for their heritage values. These include five historic shipwrecks. At present, there is one National Heritage place (HMAS *Sydney II* and HSK *Kormoran* shipwreck sites), one Commonwealth Heritage place (HMAS *Sydney II* and HSK *Kormoran* shipwreck sites) and no World Heritage places in the South-west Marine Region.

The Commonwealth Heritage List is a list of natural, indigenous and historic heritage places owned or controlled by the Australian Government. It includes places connected to defence, communications, customs and other government activities that reflect Australia's development as a nation.

Historic shipwrecks

The *Historic Shipwrecks Act 1976* states that an historic shipwreck is a shipwreck that is:

- more than 75 years old
- located in Commonwealth waters.

A shipwreck that is less than 75 years old may be declared a historic shipwreck by the minister if it is deemed to possess historical significance. The minister does not need to know the location of the shipwreck to declare it a historic shipwreck. Five historic shipwrecks have been declared or located within the region (Table 1).

Shipwreck name	Year	Description	Depth	Protection zone
HMAS <i>Sydney II</i>	1941	Light cruiser sunk following a battle engagement with HSK <i>Kormoran</i> , approximately 290 km off the central coast of Western Australia	-2420 m	A no entry protection zone has been declared around HMAS <i>Sydney II</i> . Permits are required under the <i>Historic Shipwrecks Act 1976</i> (s. 15) to enter this protection zone
HSK <i>Kormoran</i>	1941	Auxiliary cruiser sunk following a battle engagement with HMAS <i>Sydney II</i> , approximately 290 km off the central coast of Western Australia	-2513 m	A no entry protection zone has been established around HSK <i>Kormoran</i> . Permits are required under the <i>Historic Shipwrecks Act 1976</i> (s. 15) to enter this protection zone
SS <i>Cambewarra</i>	1914	A steam-powered transport vessel that was wrecked near Fisherman's Island, 80 km south of Dongara, Western Australia	-48 m	na
Lord <i>Roberts</i>	1902	A cutter wrecked in the Gulf of St Vincent, South Australia	-106 m	na
Red <i>Rover</i>	1887	A fishing boat wrecked near Coffin Bay, South Australia	-72 m	na

na = not applicable

Note: There will be six historic shipwrecks listed in the South-west Marine Region in 2011 upon the 75th anniversary of the foundering of MV *Stanford*.

Listed heritage places

The HMAS *Sydney II* and the HSK *Kormoran* battle site and wrecks were added to the Commonwealth and National Heritage lists on 14 March 2011. By virtue of their listing on the National Heritage List, these two shipwrecks are also matters of national environmental significance. The site lies about 290 km west-south-west of Carnarvon, just inside the northern boundary of the South-west Marine Region. The wrecks are located at a depth of about 2450 m and the site extends over an area of approximately 460 km². The site is included on the lists for its historic heritage values. The shipwrecks have significant heritage value because of their:

- importance in a defining event in Australia's cultural history and for their part in the development of the defence of Australia
- potential to yield information that would contribute to a greater understanding of Australia's involvement in World War II
- strong and special association with particular communities and the Australian community as a whole.

The shipwreck site of HSK *Kormoran* also has significant heritage value because of its importance in demonstrating a high degree of creative and technical achievement during World War II.

2. Vulnerabilities and pressures

Vulnerabilities

Most materials used to construct vessels are vulnerable to various forms and degrees of deterioration in the marine environment. The rate and scale of vessel deterioration depends upon two factors:

- fortitude of the materials used in construction
- duration and force of disturbance.

Disturbance, which encompasses both environmental and anthropogenic threats, causes physical deterioration to vessels. Physical scouring or smothering (from sediment dispersal) may progressively deteriorate a shipwreck. Unimpeded south-westerly waves and swells create a high-energy environment that can produce wave abrasion at depths down to 60 m. In deeper environments, sediments are moved intermittently during winter storms, with fine-grained sediments transported off-shelf to an approximate depth of 120 m (James et al. 2001). Direct impacts (such as anchorage or vessel strike) could cause immediate damage to a shipwreck.

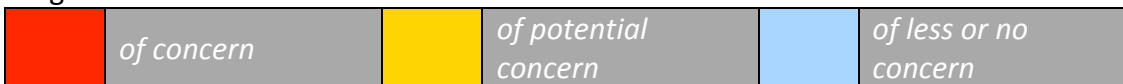
Assessment of pressures

Pressures on five historic shipwrecks in the region have been assessed on the basis of current information. A description of the pressure assessment process, including the definition of substantial impact used in this assessment, is provided in the *Overview of marine bioregional plans* available at www.environment.gov.au/coasts/mbp/index.html. There are no pressures of concern or of potential concern to historic shipwrecks in the region.

A summary of the pressure assessment is provided in Table 2.

Table 2. Pressures on historic shipwrecks in the South-west Marine Region			
Pressures		On-shelf shipwrecks ^a	Off-shelf shipwrecks ^b
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ <i>SS Cambewarra</i> ▪ <i>Lord Roberts</i> ▪ <i>Red Rover</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ <i>HMAS Sydney II</i> ▪ <i>HSK Kormoran</i>
Environmental pressures	Current, tide and wave action		na
Anthropogenic pressures	Offshore resource location and extraction		
	Dredging		na
	Vessel interaction (anchorage and other direct interactions)		na
	Human interaction (physical contact, pilferage and vandalism, and other direct interactions)		
	Climate change		

Legend



na = not applicable

^a On-shelf shipwrecks are shipwrecks located upon the continental shelf

^b Off-shelf shipwrecks are shipwrecks located beyond the continental shelf

3. Current protection measures

Historic Shipwrecks Act 1976

The *Historic Shipwrecks Act 1976* aims to protect historic shipwrecks for their heritage values, maintain them for educational and recreational purposes, and regulate activities that may result in their damage, interference, removal or destruction. The Historic Shipwrecks Act contains six principal protection measures to meet its management objectives:

- *Protection zones*
Protection zones are declared by the minister and prohibit entry into a declared zone. A protection zone may extend up to 200 hectares and includes the airspace above, the waters or land beneath, the seabed and seabed subsoil (www.environment.gov.au/heritage/shipwrecks/protected-zones.html).
- *Prohibitions against certain actions*
A person must not unlawfully engage in conduct that destroys, damages, interferes, disposes or removes an historic shipwreck or relic. Upon conviction under this section, a person is punishable by a fine not exceeding \$10 000 or imprisonment for a period not exceeding five years, or both. A body corporate is punishable by a fine not exceeding \$50 000.

- *Permits*
If an action will damage, destroy or interfere with an historic shipwreck or relic, a permit must be obtained from the minister before commencement of the action (www.environment.gov.au/heritage/publications/shipwreck-forms-permits.html).
- *Ministerial directions regarding possession, custody or control*
The minister may require a person in possession, custody or control of a shipwreck, article or relic to undertake an action to ensure its preservation.
- *Maintenance of a historic shipwreck register*
The minister shall operate a Register of Historic Shipwrecks. A new Australian National Shipwrecks Database was launched in 2009 and includes all known shipwrecks in Australian waters (www.environment.gov.au/heritage/shipwrecks/database.html).
- *Duty to notify of a shipwreck discovery*
A person who finds the remains of a vessel or any associated article must inform the minister as soon as practicable. Notification can be made via apps5a.ris.environment.gov.au/shipwreck/public/forms/notification.do?mode=add.

Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999

The EPBC Act also provides protection to historic shipwrecks through its environmental impact assessment process. Historic shipwrecks possess national heritage values. Any action that has the potential to significantly affect a matter of national environmental significance—including places with national heritage values and therefore historic shipwrecks—must be referred to the department that administers the EPBC Act for assessment.

4. References

James, NP, Bone, Y, Collins, LB & Kyser, TK 2001, 'Surficial sediments of the Great Australian Bight: facies dynamics and oceanography on a vast cool-water carbonate shelf', *Journal of Sedimentary Research, Section B: Stratigraphy and Global Studies*, vol. 71, pp. 549–67.

