



Media release

From the Northern Territory Minister for Natural Resources, Environment and Heritage
and Federal Minister for Environment, Heritage and the Arts

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Protection For A Significant Piece Of Wartime History

The WWII shipwreck *Florence D* is now protected under the Commonwealth's *Historic Shipwrecks Act 1976* after its discovery was confirmed in waters off Bathurst Island, following important work by a Territory Government department.

The maritime archaeology team from the Heritage branch of the Department of Natural Resources, Environment, The Arts and Sport played a key role in confirming the discovery of the ship earlier this year by Darwin fisherman Wayne Keeping and diver Jim Miles.

The 2600 tonne merchant ship *Florence D* was sunk by Japanese bombers returning from the first air attack on Darwin on February 19, 1942.

Three crew members and a US Navy member rescued earlier from a Catalina died in the attack, while 30 survivors travelled to Bathurst Island on a life boat and were rescued three days later.

Heritage Minister Alison Anderson said it was vital that structural reminders of significant events in history were preserved, and congratulated those involved in the ship's discovery.

"Assessment by my Department's Heritage branch has shown that the *Florence D* is a significant piece of history, and also an important memorial to those who lost their lives in the attack on Darwin and its surrounding waters," Ms Anderson said.

Federal Heritage Minister Peter Garrett has announced that a protected zone is now in place under the Historic Shipwrecks Act, which will control access at the site so that it can continue to be part of Australia's heritage.

"The Historic Shipwrecks Act protects Australia's historic shipwrecks and is administered by the Australian Government in cooperation with the States and Territories," Minister Garrett said.

"With more than 7,500 shipwrecks scattered off our beautiful but sometimes treacherous coastline it is vital that we continue to work together with State and Territory government partners to protect and preserve these wrecks and their relics, which are often only windows to understanding important aspects of our nation's history."

Federal Member for Lingiari, the Hon. Warren Snowdon MP, said it's important the nation recognises Australia's history in and around the Northern Territory.



“The story of *Florence D* and her final resting place by Bathurst Island is part of the Territory’s and the whole nation’s World War II history, and it deserves to be remembered, retold, and the wreck protected.”

