

JOINT MEDIA RELEASE



The Hon Peter Garrett MP
*Australian Government Minister for the
Environment, Heritage and the Arts*



The Hon. Kristina Keneally MP
Member for Heffron
Minister for Planning
Minister for Redfern Waterloo

31 May 2009

JAPANESE MIDGET SUBMARINE M-24 DECLARED AN HISTORIC SHIPWRECK

The Japanese midget submarine *M-24* has been declared an historic shipwreck under the Commonwealth *Historic Shipwreck Act 1976* on the 67th anniversary of the attack on Sydney Harbour during World War II. The announcement was made today by Federal Heritage Minister Peter Garrett and the New South Wales Minister for Planning, Kristina Keneally.

Mr Garrett said that protection under the Act will ensure that the wreck remains intact as a reminder of our vast maritime history.

"The Japanese midget submarine *M-24* was one of three midget submarines that attacked Sydney Harbour in the late afternoon of 31 May and morning of 1 June 1942. We know that after firing both torpedoes, the crew of the *M-24* made for the harbour entrance and disappeared. We can only speculate on its movements from that point, as we do not know why the midget submarine failed to reach the submarines' rendezvous point.

"In November 2006 a submarine, thought to be the *M-24* was located by a team of amateur divers. The site was provisionally declared an historic shipwreck and a protected zone was provided to give additional protection while awaiting its positive identification.

"I am pleased to announce that the *M-24* has been positively identified and is now fully protected under the *Historic Shipwrecks Act 1976*, making it an offence to disturb, damage or remove relics from the wreck.

"Penalties for breaching the Act include up to \$50,000 for a body corporate and \$10,000 and/or imprisonment for up to five years for an individual," Mr Garrett said.

Ms Keneally welcomed the Federal Government's decision to declare the *M-24* an historic shipwreck under the Commonwealth's *Historic Shipwrecks Act*.

"The *M-24* submarine holds a great deal of historical significance to Australia, NSW and Japan and provides important insights into the historic events of 31 May 1942.," Ms Keneally said.

"Its protection is considered an important responsibility of the Australian nation and the NSW State Government.

"Initially the *M24* wreck was protected under an Interim Heritage Order before it was listed on the State Heritage Register in 2007.

"Under the NSW Heritage Act, penalties up to \$1.1 million and or six months imprisonment apply to any person damaging the site.

"The site is also protected by a 500 metre radius no-go zone and 24/7 security monitoring under the joint agreement of the NSW and Commonwealth Government with the support of the Japanese Government."

Digital footage is available of the Royal Australian Navy clearance divers (Department of Defence), providing expert assistance to the NSW Heritage Branch archaeological surveys at the *M-24* in 2007.

Footage is available from <http://www.environment.gov.au/heritage/media.html>