

COMMERCIAL FISHING INDUSTRY VICTORIA

GUIDELINES FOR REPORTING SHIPWRECK
DISCOVERIES



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Acknowledgment

We acknowledge and respect Victorian Traditional Owners as the original custodians of Victoria's land and waters, their unique ability to care for Country and deep spiritual connection to it. We honour Elders past and present whose knowledge and wisdom has ensured the continuation of culture and traditional practices.

We are committed to genuinely partner, and meaningfully engage, with Victoria's Traditional Owners and Aboriginal communities to support the protection of Country, the maintenance of spiritual and cultural practices and their broader aspirations in the 21st century and beyond.



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1. Introduction

There are approximately 780 ships wrecked around the Victorian coast. To date only 324 have been found. Shipwrecks are fragile caches of valuable information about Australian and world history. It's important that new shipwreck discoveries are reported and recorded as soon as possible.

Victoria's underwater cultural heritage includes a variety of vessels ranging from wooden sailing ships, steamships and submarines that have sunk along the Victorian coast from the beginning of Victoria's settlement to the mid-20th century. These wrecks are part of our cultural heritage and it is our collective responsibility to protect Victoria's heritage for current and future generations.

Commercial fishers are uniquely placed to support the protection of Australia's underwater cultural heritage by reporting previously undiscovered wreck sites found during everyday operations. Heritage Victoria has prepared these guidelines to simplify the reporting of these new sites.

The guidelines provide a step by step guide for finders to report shipwrecks or artefacts recovered in fishing operations. This includes providing ready access to a Heritage Victoria maritime archaeologist to help report the discovery. An awareness program on how to recognise and record discoveries is also being prepared.

The guidelines form part of the new Shipwreck Discovery Program. This program aims to simplify wreck reporting, recognise the important role of maritime industries as custodians of our underwater cultural heritage, increase collaboration between maritime archaeologists and industry participants and facilitate the search for Victoria's top 20 most significant undiscovered shipwrecks.

The program will be trialled for twelve months from late 2020 as a collaborative, voluntary project between Heritage Victoria and the commercial fishing industry. The outcomes will be used to develop guidelines for maritime industries in Victoria and possibly nationally.

2. Shipwreck Discoveries

Commercial fishers may encounter two types of shipwreck discoveries - shipwreck sites and artefacts. Shipwrecks are the remains or any part of the remains of a ship and any marine concretions and accretions that may have become attached to the remains of the ship. Shipwreck artefacts are any objects associated with a shipwreck and any marine concretions and accretions that have become attached to the artefact.

To assist commercial fishers in using the guidelines, shipwreck sites and artefacts are:

Shipwreck Sites

Marine obstructions or deposits which lead to snagging or fastening of fishing gear or damaged or tangled gear.

Other underwater cultural heritage features may include dumping sites or downed aircraft. Unless the feature is already charted as a wreck site or can be clearly identified as a natural feature it should be treated as potential underwater cultural heritage and reported.

Artefacts

All human-made objects that are recovered in fishing gear. Items of modern origin (i.e. post 1950) such as plastic objects, cans, modern coins, computer and mechanical components should not be reported.

3. Shipwreck Legislation

Both Victorian and Commonwealth legislation applies to the protection of shipwrecks and artefacts in Australia. You can dive or fish on most of Victoria's shipwrecks. However, it is an offence to interfere with, damage or disturb wreck sites or take artefacts from a shipwreck.

Shipwrecks in Victoria are protected under the *Victorian Heritage Act 2017* and the *Heritage (Underwater Cultural Heritage) Regulations 2017*. The Commonwealth Government's *Underwater Cultural Heritage Act 2018* protects shipwrecks and sunken aircraft that occurred 75 or more years ago, regardless of whether their location is known. Other types of underwater cultural heritage, and more recent shipwrecks or aircraft, may be protected through a declaration under the Act.

Permits are required to disturb a shipwreck in any way, and the discovery of shipwrecks or artefacts must be notified within 21 days of the find. The day to day management of both the Commonwealth and Victorian legislation in Victoria is the responsibility of Heritage Victoria.

A key provision of the Victorian and Commonwealth legislation is the establishment of protected zones around significant and/or fragile shipwreck sites. It is an offence to enter, anchor, fish, trawl or dive in a protected zone without a permit. Permits to transit or enter a protected zone can be applied for from Heritage Victoria. The permits are subject to fees and fines apply if a person is found within a protected zone without a permit.

Artefacts that have been removed from shipwrecks continue to be protected by legislation. The legislation requires individuals to report the possession of artefacts. Custody of artefacts is allowed providing the person has a permit and it is illegal to export or import artefacts without a permit. The Heritage Victoria Maritime Archaeologist must be notified of any artefacts not previously reported. Heritage Victoria's Maritime Archaeology Team can provide support and advice to finders or the industry in relation to these obligations.

4. Why Report Shipwreck Discoveries?

Some of the reasons for fishers to use these guidelines to report shipwreck discoveries are summarised below:

- Shipwrecks and artefacts are part of our culture and are an important link in our history.
- It is an offence under both Victorian and Commonwealth legislation to not report the location of a shipwreck or artefact and penalties apply.
- Reporting discoveries makes it easier for fishers to comply with shipwreck legislation.
- The time spent reporting finds will be minimised by having the finder communicate directly with the Heritage Victoria Maritime Archaeology Team.
- Not all marine obstructions need to be reported. The guidelines and awareness program will make it clear to the finder on what needs to be reported and what doesn't.
- Protected Zones are intended to keep wrecks safe from damage caused by anchors and fishing line entanglements, however there are very strict parameters that need to be met before a shipwreck is given Protected Zone status. Only 10 shipwrecks in Victoria out of 324 wrecks found (i.e. 3.1%) have been declared Protected Zones. The likelihood of restrictions being placed on fishing if a wreck is reported is very small.

- If a shipwreck is reported, it is less likely to lead to a Protected Zone than if it is not reported and subsequently disturbed by unauthorised diving.
- Permits can be provided to allow non-damaging fishing activities on a shipwreck site. Permit fees may be waived as a consequence of reporting a shipwreck discovery.
- There is a reputational incentive to use marine resources responsibly and maintain sustainable practices.
- Shipwreck and artefact discoveries are often publicised in the media. The finder will be acknowledged as the discoverer and there is likely to be positive publicity for the commercial fishing industry and the finder if discoveries are reported.
- Fishers can also help protect our underwater cultural heritage by reporting diving activity and removal of artefacts from known wreck sites.

5. Reporting Process

Heritage Victoria recognises that commercial fishers are very busy and that it is important to minimise reporting activities to a set of simple actions by the finder and to provide ready access to a maritime archaeologist. The guidelines primarily apply to reporting shipwrecks that have not been previously recorded and newly discovered or not previously reported artefacts.

On locating a possible shipwreck site or artefact, the first step is for the finder to record or estimate the GPS position of the discovery. After recording the site location, the finder can phone Heritage Victoria's Maritime Archaeology Team.

This verbal report will enable the maritime archaeologist to provide an initial assessment of the discovery and advise the finder on the course of action to be taken. Overseas experience suggests that the best time for the finder to call the maritime archaeologist is when the vessel is at sea returning to port at the conclusion of the day's fishing activities.

Heritage Victoria's maritime archaeologist will provide advice and guidance and inform the finder on the progress of the discovery.

Discoveries will be reported on-line through the "*Notification of discovery of underwater cultural heritage*" link on the Australasian Underwater Cultural Heritage Database website. The finder has the option of requesting the maritime archaeologist to report the discovery on their behalf or to report it themselves.

Finders will be acknowledged on the website and the most important discoveries will be included in an annual report to the Commonwealth Government. Discoveries also have the potential to generate significant media attention for the commercial fishing industry and for underwater cultural heritage generally.

Commercial fishers will also be encouraged to provide information on known marine obstructions that could subsequently be identified as potential new shipwreck sites.

The following pages provide a step-by-step user guide in understanding and applying these guidelines.

6. Finder's User Guide

1. What should I do if I find a marine obstruction or artefact?

If you find a marine obstruction



Hurricane shipwreck

Step 1: Record the location of the site

- Record the GPS co-ordinates or estimate the position of the marine obstruction as soon as the fishing gear is snagged.
- Check the co-ordinates of the obstruction against the marine chart to see if it's already charted.
- If already charted take no further action.
- If chart check is inconclusive, report the obstruction.
- If more than one obstruction in the area, record the GPS co-ordinates of each obstruction separately.
- Information from other persons on the location of potential shipwrecks can also be reported.

If you find an artefact

Step 1: Record the location of the artefact

- Check the fishing gear after a snag to see if there are any artefacts.
- Record the GPS co-ordinates of the vessel at the time of the discovery.
- Take a photo of the artefact.
- If a small artefact is recovered, try to keep it in a container covered in sea water.
- If the artefact is too large to keep on board record the GPS co-ordinates of where it is dropped at sea.



Stoneware Jar: S.S City of Launceston shipwreck

2. Who should I report the find to?

After finding a shipwreck site or artefact

Step 2: Report the location

- Call the Heritage Victoria Maritime Archaeology Team on **0419 043 951** to report the location of the find.
- This can be done when returning to port.
- If unable to contact while at sea, contact the archaeologist after returning to port.

Contact can also be made by contacting Heritage Victoria at heritage.victoria@delwp.vic.gov.au or on 03 7022 6390.

After notifying Heritage Victoria, you can report discoveries online at the **Australasian Underwater Cultural Heritage Database** website: <https://environment.gov.au/shipwreck/public/forms/notification.do?mode=add>

Further information and a form to report the shipwreck site or artefact can be found on Heritage Victoria's website: <https://www.heritage.vic.gov.au/protecting-our-heritage/report-maritime-heritage>

3. What will Heritage Victoria's Maritime Archaeologist do?

On receiving a finder report

Step 3: Advice and guidance provided to the finder

Heritage Victoria's Maritime Archaeologist will:

- undertake an initial assessment of the discovery;
- if likely to be underwater cultural heritage, report the discovery on behalf of the finder on the Australasian Underwater Cultural Heritage Database website or advise the finder on how to report it themselves;
- confirm receipt of reports submitted by the finder on-line, by email or post, if applicable;
- research and assess the discovery;
- confirm or not that the discovery is of archaeological importance;
- give advice to the finder on what to do with any artefacts;
- prepare a report on the discovery;
- give the finder a copy of the report and include it on the Australasian Underwater Cultural Heritage Database website;
- commence appropriate site management activities, if required; and
- invite the finder to participate in site activities, as appropriate.

7. Guidelines for Identifying Finds

The following table provides common examples of artefacts that might be found:

Category	Examples	Is it reportable?	Comment
Rubber, plastic or bakelite	Car tyres, plastic bottles	No	These are items of modern origin and not reportable
Iron and steel	Metal sheeting, bolts, nails and related objects	Yes	Usually reportable, if iron and steel items are found contact Heritage Victoria.
Other metals	Copper and aluminium objects, coins	Yes	Copper and bronze objects may indicate a shipwreck site. Aluminium objects may indicate an aircraft wreck
Bone	Human or animal bone	Yes	Large quantities of animal bone may indicate a shipwreck (e.g. cargo or provisions) Any suspected human bones should be treated with respect and the Coroner notified
Wood	Different types of hardwood, bark	Yes	Pieces of wood that have been shaped or jointed or fixed with nails, bolts or wooden pegs. May include large quantities of bark (i.e. cargo)
Stone	Large groupings of stones	Yes	Recovery of a large number of stones may indicate the ballast mound of a shipwreck
Pottery and glass	Pottery and glass objects and fragments (e.g. bottles, crockery)	Yes	Pottery and glass objects are reportable
Brick	Old bricks and brick fragments	Yes	Reportable

Please note that any Unexploded Ordnance including munitions, bombs and mines need to be reported in the first instance to Victoria Police and advice provided to Heritage Victoria.

Examples of finds



Metal sheeting: *Amazon* shipwreck



Animal bone fragment: *William Salthouse* shipwreck



Wood fragment (note fasteners): Unknown shipwreck



Glass bottle: *S.S City of Launceston* shipwreck



Ceramic plate: *Joanna* shipwreck

8. Further Information

Heritage Victoria

Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning
Level 16, 150 Lonsdale Street,
Melbourne, Victoria 3000

Telephone: 0419 043 951 (Maritime Archaeologist) or 03 7022 6390

Email: heritage.victoria@delwp.vic.gov.au

Postal Address: PO Box 500 East Melbourne 8002

Australasian Underwater Cultural Heritage Database Reporting Form:

<https://environment.gov.au/shipwreck/public/forms/notification.do?mode=add>

delwp.vic.gov.au