

Protection for Historic Shipwrecks

South Australia has a rich maritime history with more than 800 shipwrecks recorded along the coast and inland waters. The remains of these vessels are important educational, recreational and tourism assets.

The development of SCUBA diving in the 1950s led to the discovery and exploitation of some of Australia's most significant shipwrecks. Wreck material was pillaged as 'treasure', souvenirs or scrap metal. Many vessels were illegally blown apart with explosives, with total disregard for the archaeological integrity of the site or its future enjoyment by others.

In 1976 the Commonwealth Government acknowledged the need to protect significant shipwreck sites and relics with the introduction of the *Historic Shipwrecks Act 1976*. Complementary South Australian legislation followed a few years later, with the *Historic Shipwrecks Act 1981*.

Under these Acts significant shipwrecks or relics are protected as declared Historic Shipwrecks, with people encouraged to visit them on a 'look but don't interfere' basis.

Any wreck in Commonwealth waters which is 75 years or older is automatically protected. Other Historic Shipwrecks (either found or as yet unlocated) are individually declared, once their significance has been determined.

Heritage SA is the South Australian Government agency responsible for administering the Historic Shipwrecks Acts. To date, 181 South Australian shipwrecks have been declared Historic.

Much of South Australia's coastline is defined as Commonwealth waters for the purposes of the Historic Shipwreck Acts. State waters include the two gulfs (Spencer and St Vincent), four historic bays (Anxious, Encounter, Lacepede and Rivoli) and all inland waters.

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Cover photograph:

SS *Admella* wrecked 1859 at Carpenter
Rocks with eighty-nine lives lost



Historic Shipwrecks in South Australia



Shipwrecks – windows to the past



Heritage South Australia



Government
of South Australia

Historic Shipwreck criteria

An agreed set of assessment criteria is applied to determine the significance of a shipwreck or relic that has been recommended for declaration as Historic.

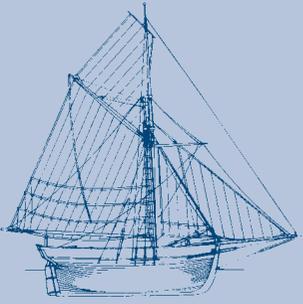
Both the nature (historic, technical, social, archaeological, scientific) and the degree (rare or representative) of significance are considered. Many Historic Shipwrecks display features which are a combination of these criteria.



Historic

concerned with past events and people
is relevant to a particular person, phase or event of historical importance.

- ◀ The wooden cutter *Water Witch* (1835-1842) in the River Murray near Blanchetown was associated with the explorer Edward John Eyre, transporting provisions to the Great Australian Bight during his expedition across the Nullarbor in 1842.



Technical

concerned with technical or creative accomplishment
demonstrates the development of new technology or innovative design or the perfection of established technical or creative achievements.

The screw steamer *Clan Ranald* (1900-1909) near Troubridge Hill is the only example in Australian waters of a turret ship – a unique construction design used between 1892 and 1911.



Social

concerned with community regard or esteem
is valued by a present-day community for social, cultural, religious, aesthetic or educational associations beyond the normal regard for local heritage.

The iron ship *Star of Greece* (1868-1888) near Port Willunga was one of South Australia's worst shipping disasters and is extremely significant to the local community, many of whose forebears assisted in the rescue of the few survivors.



Archaeological

concerned with the historical research potential of material remains
contains material evidence which potentially contributes to an understanding of the past (eg ship construction and design, trade, settlement or transport) and which is not readily available through other research techniques.

- ◀ The iron barque *Geltwood* (1876-1876) near Southend has considerable structural and cargo remains which can provide valuable information about sailing vessel construction and trade in the nineteenth century



Scientific

concerned with the research potential through physical, chemical and biological testing
contributes information about natural sciences or the effect of immersion on manufactured materials. Includes sites where testing and evaluation of in situ protective measures is possible.

- ◀ The composite barque *Zanoni* (1865-1867) near Ardrossan is one of the most intact shipwrecks in Australia and is undergoing on-site conservation using sacrificial anodes.



Interpretive

concerned with public education values
has the accessibility, setting and integrity to contribute to public education through on-site interpretation which highlights its heritage value.

- ◀ The steel barque *Norma* (1898-1907) off Semaphore has an underwater plaque on-site as part of *Adelaide's Underwater Heritage Trail* and is one of the State's most visited shipwrecks.



Rare

concerned with uncommon or exceptional aspects of the past
is an example of a distinctive way of life, process, custom, use or design which is no longer practised.

- ◀ The iron barque *Santiago* (1856-1945) in the North Arm of the Port River is a rare and relatively intact example of an early iron-built sailing vessel.



Representative

concerned with the typical or characteristic
demonstrates the characteristics of a range of human activities or achievements.

- ◀ The iron ship *Songvaar* (1884-1912) off Wardang Island is representative of the large windjammers which carried South Australia's grain export to Europe during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.