

# Media Release



## ex HMAS Canberra Reef

### **VARs calls for volunteers to help sink the ex HMAS Canberra in Victoria**

**Friday, 12th October 2007:** In 2008, the ex HMAS Canberra warship will be sunk in Victoria to create a major new temperate water dive site. The Victorian Artificial Reef Society (VARs) is now calling for volunteers to help with this exciting project.

#### ***The Story So Far***

In July 2007, the Minister for Defence, Brendan Nelson, announced the Federal Government would contribute \$7 million towards the cost of sinking the ex HMAS Canberra as a dive site for Victoria. The Victorian Government has also pledged \$1 million. Project Management responsibility for this project was handed over to the Defence Material Organisation (DMO).

DMO quickly issued a Request for Tender for the preparation of the ex HMAS Canberra for scuttling. A number of responses were received and it is expected DMO will announce the winning contractor within a few weeks.

#### ***Real Work Begins***

VARs expects the winning contractor will start work on preparing the warship for sinking in December 2007. Then, sometime in 2008, holed by a series of carefully placed explosive charges, the ex HMAS Canberra will be scuttled outside of Port Phillip Bay.

Within days of the sinking, we expect to have divers reporting schools of small fish sheltering in her cavernous hull. And after just a few weeks, her grey war paint will be mottled with the seedlings of an undersea garden as the warship starts to become a living reef.

But there is still much work to be done by VARs to ensure the Victorian diving community fully benefits from this magnificent opportunity.

#### ***Can You Help?***

VARs is looking to recruit volunteers to take part in what may be a once in a lifetime opportunity to sink a warship. This is your chance to be involved in exciting activities like:

- liaising with DMO and the successful contractor on the preparation of the vessel;
- lobbying the Victorian Government for the preferred dive site location;
- helping to develop site access, management, and preservation plans;

- promoting the artificial reef as a unique marine education/research opportunity;
- arranging for artefacts from the ex HMAS Canberra to be made available as memorial sites;
- helping to prepare dive plans, wreck site maps and diver resources;
- liaising with tourism authorities, plus tourism and dive industry operators to ensure the dive site is promoted locally, nationally and overseas;
- organising arrival and scuttling celebrations; and
- being amongst the first to dive the wreck.

VARs now has an expanded committee of 8 members, made up of a balance of volunteers from both the commercial and non commercial sectors of the Victorian diving community. This committee **will need many volunteers** to help through the final stages in preparing the ex HMAS Canberra.

Whatever your skills, experience or interests, there is much you could contribute. VARs invites you to check out the **Volunteer Today** section of its web site at [www.vars.org.au](http://www.vars.org.au) to see how you can help and volunteer.

The ex HMAS Canberra Reef will add a new dimension to the diverse and wonderful diving around Port Phillip Heads and **enhance Victoria's reputation as a world class temperate water diving destination. Be a part of it!**

### ENDS ###

## About VARs

The Victorian Artificial Reef Society (VARs) is the non-profit, volunteer Victorian dive community group behind the push to secure, prepare, sink and dive the ex HMAS Canberra as an artificial reef and wreck dive site for Victoria. All major groups in the Victorian scuba diving industry, plus the Victorian sport diving club, have recognised VARs as their voice on all matters relating to the ex HMAS Canberra Reef.

For more information on VARs and the ex HMAS Canberra Reef project, please visit [www.hmascanberra.com.au](http://www.hmascanberra.com.au).

Media Enquiries:

**Mike Reed**

Victorian Artificial Reef Society

Mobile: 0418 144 084

Email: [vicepresident@vars.org.au](mailto:vicepresident@vars.org.au)