

# Media Release



## **VARs reports on the ex HMAS Canberra**

**Wednesday, 13th June 2007:** The Victorian Artificial Reef Society (VARs) is a non-profit, dive community group working towards the goal that one day you will be able to come and dive the ex HMAS Canberra as an artificial reef and wreck site in Victoria.

The ex HMAS Canberra project is progressing, and the VARs volunteers are working hard with the various parties to keep everything on track. The Bracks Government appointed Tourism Victoria as the Project Manager, and they are working closely with VARs to ensure the best possible outcome for Victoria.

Back in October 2006 when this project was announced, the Federal Government allocated \$2.8 million towards the project and the Victorian Government pledged \$500,000. Once the project planning process started, it became apparent the likely cost is closer to \$7 million than the \$3.2 million initially allocated. Properly preparing such a large warship for sinking as a dive site is no small undertaking.

Tim Holding, Victorian Minister of Tourism, has approached Brendon Nelson, Federal Minister of Defence, to see if each government can proportionally increase their allocation to cover the likely project cost. VARs expects the financial negotiations will be concluded by the end of June 2007.

Once the finances are allocated, it is expected the Bracks Government will sign the Deed of Gifting and ownership of the ex HMAS Canberra will transfer to Victoria. Then the real work will begin.

VARs believes the preparation of the frigate for scuttling will be handled by Tenix in consultation with the Canadian Artificial Reef Consulting group.

Once the next stage of the ex HMAS Canberra project begins, VARs will be working with Tourism Victoria and the other government authorities involved, to finalise the site location. VARs has already conducted detailed surveys of the site proposed by the government and found it to be totally unsuitable.

VARs has also investigated a number of alternative sites and has carried out a detailed survey of the dive site it is proposing. All major groups in the Victorian scuba diving industry, plus the Victorian sport diving clubs, have recognised VARs as their voice on all matters relating to the ex HMAS Canberra. They fully support the proposal VARs will be making about the dive site location.

VARs volunteers have built an impressive web site at [www.hmascanberra.com.au](http://www.hmascanberra.com.au). There you can see the current status of the project, plus information about site selection and the media coverage the project has received.

VARs has been very proactive in sending out regular news updates to the media plus Victorian dive shops and dive clubs. But the most up-to-date and accurate information will always be found at [www.hmascanberra.com.au](http://www.hmascanberra.com.au).

The VARs committee and volunteers are already working with the dive industry, Geelong Otway Tourism, Tourism Victoria and Tourism Australia in preparation for using the sinking of the ex HMAS Canberra to launch an interstate and overseas promotion of Victoria as a world class temperate water diving destination. Thus work is now underway to expand the ex HMAS Canberra web site to promote the other great wreck, reef, wall and shore dives Victoria has to offer.

There is still much to be done and the wheels of government have been moving slowly so far. However, as the representative of all Victorian divers, VARs is focused on ensuring Victoria secures the ex HMAS Canberra as a great new dive site.

### ENDS ###

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Keep up to date with the “Let’s Sink the HMAS Canberra” project at  
[www.hmascanberra.com.au](http://www.hmascanberra.com.au)