

VARs Announces the Canberra is Coming!

The ex HMAS Canberra warship will soon be in Victoria to be prepared for sinking as an artificial reef and dive site

Tuesday, 27th May 2008: The Victorian Artificial Reef Society (VARs) is pleased to announce that preparations are already underway for the ex HMAS Canberra warship to be bought to Victoria and sunk to create a major new temperate water artificial reef and dive site.

The Birdon Group has been appointed by the Federal government to prepare and sink the 30 year old FFG-7 class guided missile frigate. VARs understands that a large seagoing tug is already on its way to Rockingham in Western Australia and will soon begin towing the 138 metre long decommissioned warship to Geelong in Victoria.

Expected to arrive through Port Phillip Heads within a few weeks, the ex warship will be berthed at Geelong's grain pier where she will be carefully stripped and prepared for sinking off Point Lonsdale and Barwon Heads. This work is expected to take at least six months.

VARs will continue to work closely with the Federal and State government agencies, plus the Birdon Group, to ensure the vessel is prepared to properly meet the requirements of the Victorian dive industry and diving community.

Early in 2006, VARs began its efforts to secure the ex HMAS Canberra for Victorian divers. In July 2007, the Federal Government announced it 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).

VARs expects that sometime before mid-2009, the ex warship will be towed out through Port Phillip Heads to an area already regularly frequented by Victorian divers. There she will be holed by a series of carefully placed explosive charges, and sink 30 metres to her final resting place.

Within days of the sinking, VARs expects 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.

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.**

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 or www.vars.org.au.

Media Enquiries:

Mike Reed

Victorian Artificial Reef Society

Mobile: 0418 144 084

Email: vicepresident@vars.org.au