

# FATHOMS

EST. 1954



Safety in Diving

1995

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# VSAG

VICTORIAN SUB-AQUA GROUP

JUN-JUL 95

# VSAG

Victorian Sub-Aqua Group. Box 2526W, G.P.O., Melbourne. 3001 Australia



**Cover photo:**

**This colourful photo of Sant Khan was taken by Des Williams on VSAG's 1994 trip to the Solomons & Vanuatu**

The Victorian Sub-Aqua Group was founded in 1954 and has continued as a strong and active diving club since that time. It is incorporated as a non profit company and has no commercial affiliation with any organisation.

VSAG is committed to the preservation of independent diving freedom. It believes that divers must take a responsible attitude toward the protection and preservation of the marine environment but as a general rule is opposed to legislative measures that place prohibitive limitations and restrictions in diving activities.

Local diving is organised on a bi-monthly basis, generally out of participating member's boats. This is supported by weekend camps, charters to more remote locations and annual overseas trips. The club has a considerable investment in diving equipment.

Regular functions provide an opportunity for members, friends and families to socialise. Each month VSAG meets at North Melbourne Football Club where bar facilities are available prior to and after the General Meetings. Visitors are very welcome - smart casual wear essential.

# FATHOMS

Official journal of the *Victorian Sub - Aqua Group*

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### Next General Meetings:

Bells Hotel  
157 Moray Street (cnr. Coventry Street)  
South Melbourne - 8pm sharp!  
Thursday 15th June 1995  
Thursday 20th July 1995

### Next Committee Meetings:

Tuesday 20th June - Des William's home  
Tuesday 25th July - Doug Catherall's home

### Editorial submissions to:

Des Williams  
14 Dorrington Crt  
Dingley Village Vic 3172  
Tel: 551 3201 (h)  
597 0777 (w)  
598 1638 Fax



## V.S.A.G. COMMITTEE MEMBERS

A.C.N. 004 591 575

### PRESIDENT:

John Lawler  
7 Cloris Avenue,  
Beaumaris, 3193.  
Telephone: 589 4020 (H)  
                  (059) 75 7100 (W)

### SECRETARY:

Sant Khan  
36 Belmont Ave,  
Kew, 3101.  
Telephone: 817 3214 (H)  
                  276 3150 (W)

### NEWSLETTER EDITOR:

Des Williams  
14 Dorrington Crt  
Dingley Village, 3172  
Telephone: 551 3201 (H)  
                  597 0777 (W)

### SAFETY OFFICER &

ASSISTANT TREASURER:  
Mick Jeacle  
5 Donn Close,  
Frankston, 3199.  
Telephone: (059) 71 2786 (H)  
                  541 1880 (W)

### POINTS SCORER:

Leo Maybus  
2 Olsen Close,  
Mooroolbark, 3188.  
Telephone: 727 1568 (H)  
                  018 375102 (W)

### ASSISTANT SECRETARY:

Andy Mastrowicz  
15 Soudan Road,  
West Footscray, 3012.  
Telephone: 318 3986 (H)  
                  301 2410 (W)

### VICE PRESIDENT & PUBLIC RELATIONS:

Don Abell  
80 Liston Street,  
Burwood, 3125.  
Telephone: 889 4415 (H)  
                  288 6548 (W)

### TREASURER:

Doug Catherall  
2133 Patterson Ave,  
Burwood, 3125.  
Telephone: 888 7774 (H)

### PROPERTY OFFICER:

Pat Reynolds  
14 Nurla Court,  
Frankston, 3199.  
Telephone: 789 1092 (H)

### ASSISTANT EDITOR:

Bob Scott  
21 Eildon Parade,  
Rowville, 3178.  
Telephone: 763 6872 (H)  
                  706 7100 (w)

### SOCIAL SECRETARY:

Chris Llewellyn  
4 Bahen Close,  
Eltham North, 3095.  
Telephone: 431 1650 (H)  
                  464 1599 (w)

### S.D.F. DELEGATES:

Des Williams  
John Lawler

## EDITORIAL



WHERE HAVE ALL THE V.S.A.G.ers GONE! A very low attendance at the May general meeting begs the question. Now that we have found a new home for our monthly meetings at Bells Hotel in South Melbourne, our meetings should be overflowing with membership!

If you haven't as yet been to our venue you are missing a treat - a very comfortable hotel, excellent meals and private meeting room where there are no interruptions. So, come on folks and enjoy the cosy meeting atmosphere, we have a list of proposed guest speakers planned for the next few months to spark up those Winter months. Keep an eye on

**FATHOMS** for more details.

Since our **FATHOMS** magazine moved from monthly to bi-monthly circulation, it seems many members have had difficulty keeping a track of dates for our meetings. With **FATHOMS** more often than not being late into your hands by sometimes as little as one day after a scheduled meeting, that gentle meeting reminder fails and so does attendance. Not to mention the complete despair of the Editor, as the magazine has always been the link which has bound V.S.A.G. together.

So, how about a concerted effort by every member to lock in the **THIRD THURSDAY OF THE MONTH** as V.S.A.G. general meeting night, just put a ring around your calendar **NOW**. The Club needs the support of its members or it will become just another statistic.

Good to see another V.S.A.G. overseas trip on the drawing board, Pat Reynolds is planning an expedition to return to Truk Lagoon and Palau about May/June 1996. Mick Jeacle offered to re-open the overseas trip savings fund for those members who would like to put some money away towards this big event. Pat has chosen

**EDITORIAL cont.**

Allways Travel to co-ordinate and will be utilising the guru dive masters Clark Graham (Truk) and Francis Toribiong (Palau), so this will be a great trip.

My thanks to John Lawler and Don Abell for their contributions to this issue of FATHOMS and once again, for the second last time, I ask other members for assistance with items or articles of interest PLEASE.

Editor  
Des Williams

**SPEAKERS**

Dear Member,

Now that our new home is providing to be the best ever we can move with confidence to invite some guest speakers to our monthly meeting.

We have a number of interesting guest speakers lined up and the following are confirmed.

June Meeting 15.6.1995

**Ian Lewis**

Ian is a very well known diver and author and will give a presentation on Ice Diving, Blue Hole Diving and Wreck Diving. Ian will also have some fantastic slides and videos.

Not to be missed!

July Meeting 20.7.1995

**Geoff Skinner**

Geoff is no stranger to V.S.A.G. having given us talks in the past. Geoff is very involved in dive travel but is also one of the best known divers around and has a wealth of knowledge about dive locations in all parts of the world which he will share with us

Enter these dates into your diary now!

Regards John Lawler, President



**V.S.A.G.'S**  
***JUNE GUEST SPEAKER***  
**IAN LEWIS**

Ian was born in Mount Gambier, South Australia and began diving in 1970 to specifically explore the giant underwear sinkholes of his home district.

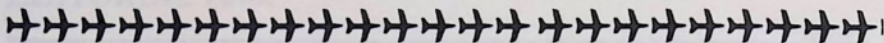
For more than 10 years he devoted his efforts to cave diving, during which he co-wrote the major reference book "Cave Diving in Australia". Ian took part in two cave based national Geographic Expeditions in Australia and dived in British and North American cave systems.

Ian was (may still be) Chief Examiner of the Cave Divers Association of Australia and is a F.A.U.I. Ocean Instructor.

One particular day, about 15 years ago, Ian climbed out of the ground and discovered the oceans! He then swung his considerable enthusiasm and energy into exploring the wonders of cool southern waters diving while instructing divers first in the Adelaide Gulfs and along the southern Australian coastline and later on Port Phillip Bay.

Using his experience as a teacher, Ian wrote his second book "Dives of the Southern Ocean - Shore Dives of Bass Strait" in 1988, to encourage all divers to share in the enjoyment of our marvellous southern waters....

So make sure you don't miss our guest speaker Ian Lewis at the June 15th meeting, as his subject will be cave diving and ocean blue holes well illustrated with underwater slides.



## V.S.A.G OVERSEAS AGAIN

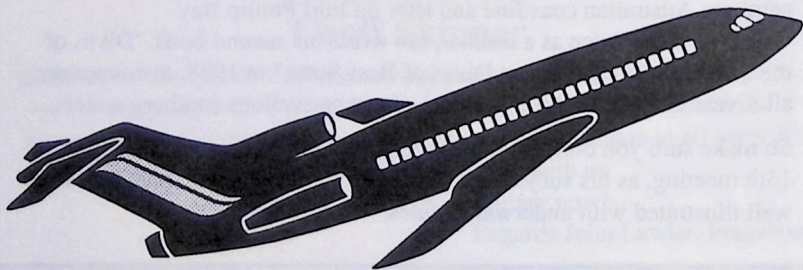
Long time V.S.A.G member, Pat Reynolds is planning another overseas trip for approx. mid 1996. How does the warm waters of Truk lagoon and Palau sound to you while Melbourne is in the grip of Winter?

If you missed the last trip to Truk and Palau in 1990 you would have to be crazy not to consider the 1996 expedition!

Anyone who went on the 1990 trip will know that Truk is brilliant and only Palau has the potential to eclipse it with gin clear wall dives, wrecks, caves and the spooky Jellyfish lake, coupled with some of the most isolated battle fields of the 2nd World War.

Pat already has about 12 interested divers, so if you feel you could handle 28 degree tropical waters and the fun of enjoying about 18 days with other V.S.A.G. members on an action packed sortie to Micronesia, give Pat a call NOW on 9789 1092.

More details will be released at the next general meeting and it is planned to have Geoff Skinner from Allways Travel to address our July meeting with video footage of Truk and Palau.





## ***WRECKS OF PALAU***

DES WILLIAMS

Hell, what a subject to pick! There are dozens of World War 2 wrecks of all shapes and sizes in Palau all of which have never been visited by V.S.A.G before. So, when I opened my copy of "Desecrate 1" by Klaus Lindemann and flicked through the 390 pages relating the story of the U.S. raid on Japanese shipping in Palau, it was hard to know where to start.

If you plan to visit Palau next year with V.S.A.G, you really should obtain a copy of this excellent book. Lindemann's was "Hailstorm Over Truk Lagoon", which gives very detailed accounts wreck by wreck of the dives he has made on the ships and "Desecrate 1" is exactly the same in its technical description. If you are interested in purchasing a copy, I am sure Peter Stone of Oceans Enterprises Tel: (051) 82 5108 or fax (051) 82 5823 will be able to help you. Researching well before a dive adventure is always rewarding.

The reef/wall diving and Jellyfish Lake at Palau was enough to set my heart on fire back in 1990. let alone the prospect of a whole new bunch of Jap wrecks. So, over the next few issues of FATHOMS I will try to give you a taste of what to expect in the wreck dept. at Palau.

In March 1944, more than fifty ships of the Japanese Imperial Navy were destroyed at Palau during the American air strike Operation Desecrate. Following their devastating losses one month earlier at Truk Lagoon, the Japanese fleets relocated their main supply centre and naval base to palau. On March 30 and 31, the Americans repeated the strategy they had used so successfully in Truk - destroying major enemy bases solely with warplanes launched from the aircraft carriers of Task Force 58, under the command of Admiral Marc Mitscher.

Tipped off to the impending American attack by Japanese spotter planes, several ships of the Imperial fleet made a narrow escape through Allied submarines that had surrounded the Palau Lagoon. The super battleship MUSASHI, flagship of Admiral Koga, commander of the Japanese Combined Fleet, was hit by a torpedo, but was able to limp away before the Americans mined the channels into the harbour

preventing any further escape. The remaining ships were trapped in the lagoon, and after two days of intense raids they were hopelessly ablaze and sinking.

Soon after the war, many of the ships were salvaged by several professional Japanese companies as well as by a local Palauan company. Salvage operations ended in the mid 1950's and for the next thirty years the ships were ignored.

In 1988, Klaus Lindemann spurred renewed interest with his book "Desecrate 1". Also at this time, the U.S. National Parks Service prepared a report on the ships that included detailed drawings, photographs and videotapes.

Even with all the recent research, many of the ships have yet to be positively identified, the only remaining clues to their identity lie in a serial number on a boiler buried deep in the engine room or on an insignia found on a broken piece of crockery. Some of the ships have been transformed into living reefs magnificently adorned with forests of black coral, delicate sea fans, and schools of fish.

Most of the ships lie in the protected waters of the Palau Lagoon, just ten to fifteen minutes from Koror by boat. Many can be seen without diving deeper than 33M. All are protected under the palau Lagoon Monument Act. It is illegal to remove anything from the ships.

*Some popular dives are:*

**IRO MARU** - A fleet oil tanker 470ft long of 14,000 Tons, lying upright in 120ft. It is only 80ft to her deck. The bridge is easy to enter as is the engine room and you can swim on to see her enormous bronze propeller. The ship was anchored at the time she sank and her coral encrusted anchor chain still hangs from the starboard bow. heavily encrusted 5.5 inch guns still remain on both the bow and stern.

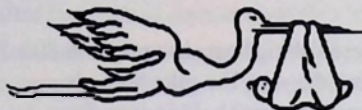
**AMATSU MARU** - Another tanker of 10,5000 tons and 527 ft long also lies upright in 130ft with only 80ft to the bridge and 100ft top the main deck. The longest wreck in the Lagoon, it will take more than one dive to explore this ship. Lindemann describes this as one of the classic wreck dives in the world and her hull is adorned with the largest known forest of black coral in Palau. The forward face of the bridge is a living wall of black coral trees, some eight to ten feet tall! At the stern the enormous four-bladed propeller has a diameter of over 16ft.

**GOZAN MARU** - A 390ft long merchant ship lies with a heavy list to port, with only 50-60ft of water over her starboard rail.

**THE BUOY NO: 6 WRECK** - An 80ft long Japanese fishing boat sits upright in 80ft of water. Probably used as a submarine chaser during the war. The pilot house is overflowing with sea fans and soft corals and the small forward hold is open for entry. Inside, divers are often surrounded by a school of silvery bait fish. A popular wreck for night dives as basket stars and orange tube corals bloom profusely.

More in the next FATHOMS.....

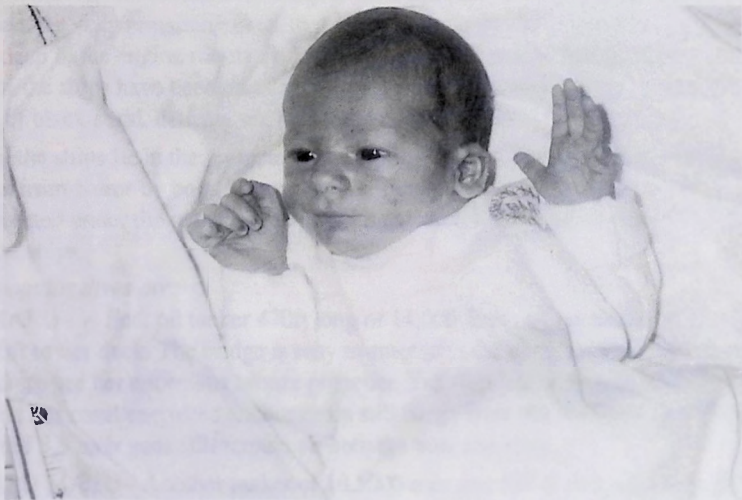




# CONGRATULATIONS

## BLAKE MITCHELL LLEWELLYN

At the May meeting V.S.A. Ger's heard all about Chris and Rhonda Llewellyn's new addition to the family! WOW! Did we hear about it!!



Chris was like a cat with a new tail, as we were "treated" to a bunch of baby photos and details of the little fell's day and night time habits. He was even seen discussing the possibilities of a size 000 Sonar wetsuit with Bob Scott!

Their little boy Blake is a real cutie as you can see from the photo Chris so generously allowed the editor to borrow.

Seriously though, congratulations Chris and Rhonda and may little Blake be a constant source of enjoyment and pleasure to you.



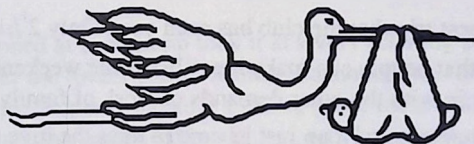
## **V.S.A.G CLUB CHRISTMAS TRIP**

This year V.S.A.G. will be gathering at Robe in South Australia for our annual Christmas dive/family holiday.

John Lawler is our trip organiser and he will be taking bookings at the next general meeting in June.

Deposits for camping sites will be payable by July  
For more details on this new location talk with John.

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# **CONGRATULATIONS**

## **ANOTHER NEW BABY!**

Congratulations to Sant and Sally on the arrival of little baby ASHA in May.

Apologies from the Editor for a great lack of further baby details, but we are sure both parents are very proud. Divers Do seem to produce more girls than boys and Sant and Sally are certainly following the trend at V.S.A.G.

## ***EASTER BASH 1995***

DON ABELL



The Easter article for "FATHOMS" always seems to be superfluous. Other than our esteemed editor Des Williams (the Rupert Murdoch of Dingley) everyone who is anyone in the Club was at Tidal River again in 1995. Attendance was 83 people and even with a few guests who joined us and are most welcome, the turn up is a credit to the club.

For me this is the best trip that the club has each year. Only 2½ hours from Melbourne means that people can make it easily for the weekend and arrive late or leave early to fit in with the other demands of work of family.

Priya and John managed to turn up just in time to miss the dive on Saturday. Any later and they would have also missed the chance to wave goodbye to divers on a perfect day.

Sant on the other hand left early after a Saturday dive and did not see one drop of the rain that engulfed us through Sunday.

Diving on Friday was in warm Sunshine on flat seas. I was confident we could not see weather any better than this, so decided to take the longer trip to Shellback Island and investigate relatively new territory for V.S.A.G.

On any of the islands we usually need to find the leeward side to escape the rolling seas and winds. On this day, there was no wind and the water calmly lapped on all sides of the island.

Sant and I fell off the brick into 50 foot visibility and beautiful territory. Big bommies to swim around and lots of sea life. It was too easy to drop into 100 foot of water, so a conscious effort was made to come up gradually to more reasonable depths for relaxed observation. It seems that all divers had similarly beautiful dives.

After a 100 foot first dive, I wanted a reasonable surface interval. Mick Jeacle called upon all his underwater experience and concluded that the tables were only



important if he was having a second dive. Since he wasn't, we could reasonably reduce the surface interval by 30 minutes so that he could get back to camp for a beer. The second dive was equally, if not more beautiful, we found some swim through, bommies, soft corals and anything else you want. it was a great opportunity to see this new territory.

Saturday brought a small problem. A potentially perfect day meant there were more divers than boats. A fifth boat would have solved the problem but alas! Some reluctant volunteers withdrew and all others launched into conditions that were possibly better than the perfect Friday. Since I was a reluctant volunteer I missed the day but the reports were consistent with the fabulous dives of the previous day.

Those of us marooned at base camp took it at a very relaxing pace. Every time I picked up the paper the lovely Nyssa would find something for me to do. So I fed the birds, bought the icypole, played a spelling game (desperately hoping I wouldn't make a mistake) coloured books, etc, etc. I even caught a lizard because Maxine Catherall refused to play big white hunter.

The weather was so perfect we decided to take a landing party to Squeaky Beach, so about a dozen of us headed off.

The water temperature is very different without one of Bobby's Sonars. The male heroes did a bit of body surfing at Squeaky. The temperature is not the problem after you turn numb. After a quick beach sprint we headed back to Base Camp. I had felt sorry for Mick carrying Tim in his little carry bag until I realised that he only volunteered because he knew Nyssa would get tired and I would have to carry her!. It's a pity she only gets tired going up hill!

Sunday brought with it a little more precipitation than we are used to at tidal river. it rained heavily for most of the day. I was getting a head cold, so I retired to sleep for a few hours. When I decided to venture outdoors I was confronted by a 2km Lake totally surrounding my tent. A good test for the tent.

Others were not so lucky. Andy Mastrowicz who never fails to have an Easter catastrophe sunk his tent into 3 inches of water. this is an insurmountable problem as floods flow through the camp so the easy solution for Andy was to

The brave souls like Doug and Maxy set out for Sealers Cove before the rain set in. I would have warned maxy if she had helped Nyssa catch the lizard! Our visitor Cathy also set out to Sealers. All three only just survived the floods, but they looked as good as drowned when they got back. Cathy did not miss the leeches and her legs resembled the aftermath of Custer last stand.

Those who braved the night were standing in dry conditions enjoying a beer in the balmy evening at 10pm. Annie Jeacle blotted her record by not partying on until midmorning on the Sunday. In fact it was hard to find any lights on after 11pm, so I hit the sleeping bag early myself.

I packed up in dry sunny conditions on Monday morning. It was even warm. Paul Sier brought out his model helicopter and entertained the whole camp with a demonstration of hovering. It seems that we could take a leaf from the books of the territory grazier and use the model choppers to herd up all the kids at night. If we could circle them into one spot we could put a fence around them for the night and then let them out the next morning.

I'll let you ponder over that, and that just proves that I do care about all the kids.

## **REMEMBER!**

**V.S.A.G GENERAL MEETINGS**

are on the

**THIRD THURSDAY OF THE MONTH!**

**AT BELLS HOTEL**

**CNR. MORAY & COVENTRY STREETS, SOUTH MELBOURNE**

*Make a note of these dates in your diary or calendar now.*

THURSDAY JUNE 20TH

THURSDAY JULY 20TH

THURSDAY AUGUST 17TH

THURSDAY SEPTEMBER 21ST

THURSDAY OCTOBER 19TH

THURSDAY NOVEMBER 21ST

Come and enjoy a delicious meal before the meeting which commences at 8pm sharp.

## MEDIA WATCH

# Divers hit by tax ruling on gauges

*"Financial review"*

By NICK TABAKOFF

AUSTRALIA'S \$100 million-plus diving industry has been hit by a major new tax slug, with the Australian Taxation Office now deeming combination gauges used by divers to be subject to sales tax.

However, accountants claim the rule contradicts current sales-tax law.

The move will add as much as \$80 to the price of combination gauges, which sell for up to \$500 each.

The tax determination STD 95/4 has deemed that the gauges are accessories to the sport of scuba diving and therefore do not qualify for sales-tax exemptions as has previously been the case.

Previous practice has seen the diving industry claim exemptions for the gauges, because they were accessories to scuba-diving tanks.

These tanks are allowed a sales-tax exemption — under the Sales Tax (Exemptions and Classifications Act) — as particular gas cylinders used for industrial purposes. This law also exempts parts and accessories used for these cylinders.

A senior tax manager with the Big Six accounting firm Price Waterhouse, Mr Phil Lawrence, said that the "general feeling in the diving industry has been that all divers' gauges are exempt", because the ATO has paid out on refund claims in the past.

The tax determination's claim that the gauges were accessories to the sport of scuba diving — rather than the tanks themselves — was fallacious, he said.

"This interpretation would come as a surprise to anyone, let alone participants in the industry," he said. The accessories were an essential part of the tank.

Mr Lawrence has also claimed that the ATO made a "fundamental error" in neglecting other possible avenues for exempting the gauges — particularly as articles used to protect people involved in "industrial operations".

Divers are commonly classified under sales-tax legislation as industrial operators.

Scuba-diving tanks and combination gauges are used widely by professional divers, and under the safety provision of the act, both tanks and combination gauges can be exempted, according to Mr Lawrence.



## MEDIA WATCH

"Daily Commercial News 22.3.95"

# Captain 'could have saved the Estonia'

HAMBURG: Investigators hired by shipbuilders blame the captain, not faulty construction, for the *Estonia* ferry disaster that killed more than 700 people in the Baltic Sea last year.

An international commission has named weak door locks and the weak steel construction of a huge top-hinged door at the front of the *Estonia* as among the reasons for the tragedy.

But Meyer-Werft, the German shipyard that built the vessel, set up its own investigation, which drew different conclusions.

German magazine *Der Spiegel* quotes Peter Holtappels, a lawyer for Meyer-Werft who doubles as leader of the shipyard's commission, as saying the panel concluded the *Estonia*'s captain bore part of the responsibility.

Holtappels said the captain kept on sailing even though there was a loud bang in the bow and the ship shuddered, not stopping the vessel's motors until it was too late. The captain could have rushed ship personnel to the bug visor to close it manually, Holtappels was quoted as saying.

According to the magazine, maritime inspectors had for years left the ship sail without a required bulkhead that would have acted as an extra seal against water coming in through the bow.

Divers have also found that two of five locks on the bow visor had never been secured, *Der Spiegel* said.

Only 137 of the 900 passengers on board survived when the *Estonia* sank on September 28, 1994, while sailing from Tallinn, Estonia to Stockholm, Sweden. AP

# Anglers tackle fish laws

By SIEVE COOPER

THE Victorian fishing tackle industry has threatened to campaign against the State Government at the next election unless it acts to upgrade recreational fishing.

A major push will be for a ban on scallop dredging in Port Phillip Bay and the use of commercial netting for recreational fishing. Anglers say scallop dredging, which involves lifting, dragging and trawling, is damaging the marine environment.

The industry also wants the Government to deal

with a deterioration of Port Phillip Bay and the breakdown of what was once a highly regarded waters.

Industry spokesmen said up to \$300,000 would be spent on a campaign against marginal scallop dredging. Among those in the campaign is Environment Minister, Mr Geoff Coleman.

Mr Phil Bailey, a former government executive and chairman of Victorian Fishing Tackle Assoc-

lation whose members account for the bulk of the \$100 million-a-year trade in recreational fishing is worth more than \$1 billion a year.

Mr Coleman said this is to meet associations to discuss their concerns.

Mr Alex Zolotow, president of the Victorian Fishing Industry Federation, said yesterday that concerns about the recreational fishing industry will be addressed in a new marine plan for Port Phillip Bay.

The State Government has to proclaim a new marine plan, he said. Anglers want the state's Fisheries Department restructured to ensure a stronger future for Vic-

torian fishing. The Peak Angling Body is an umbrella group representing anglers' interests on fishing leases - is pushing to introduce an all-land license system to cover recreational fishing.

Opponents of the proposal believe to have come from senior fisheries bureaucrats and the Victorian Fishing Industry Federation to look at restructuring and changes to scallop dredging and netting.

The body's president, Mr Nick Pflanzacka, said the Victorian Fishing Industry Federation to look at restructuring and changes to scallop dredging and netting.

A spokesman for Mr Coleman said the minister was to look at restructuring the Victorian Fishing Industry Federation to look at restructuring and changes to scallop dredging and netting.

## MEDIA WATCH

Sunday Herald Sun 16-4-95

# Salvage hope for war birds

By DEREK BALLANTINE

AN EERIE underwater air force of World War II fighter planes has been discovered on the seabed 50km off Queensland's Sunshine Coast.

Scores of Grumman Hellcats, Vought Corsairs and Grumman Avengers are resting in 300m of water as if they have just landed.

"It's an amazing sight," said Melbourne computer engineer Don Dennis, who found the underwater dump.

"It's as if someone put them there just yesterday."

Hundreds of aircraft may be there. Most are resting on their wheels on soft sand, while even those which are overturned are only slightly damaged.

The scene resembles a busy airport — except it is in deep water at the edge of the continental shelf. It is the site where unwanted planes were discarded from ships when World War II ended 50 years ago.

The explanation for the safe landing of the warbirds is that their wings caused them to glide through water.

They have remained free of corrosion because of the great depth, while a strong



Valuable: Don Dennis holds a model of a Grumman Corsair. Picture: PAUL TREZISE

underwater current has swept them clean of sand and marine growths for 50 years.

All are aircraft of Britain's Royal Navy Fleet Air Arm, which operated in the Pacific with Australian and US forces when hostilities ended in Europe.

They were supplied by the US under a lend-lease agreement, which stated they must be disposed of at the end of hostilities.

Research by Mr Dennis has revealed they were ferried by ship from repair and maintenance bases in Queensland, tipped overboard, and forgotten.

He was alerted by a rumor he heard in a hotel — and now hopes

to rescue many of the aircraft from their watery landing place off Maroochydore.

They could be worth millions of dollars to Mr Dennis and his partners, prawn fisherman Chester Malln and marine engineer David Cassell, who are setting up a salvage operation.

A week ago they were credited with finding the wreck of the *Centaur*, a hospital ship torpedoed off Queensland by a Japanese submarine as it steamed from Sydney to Port Moresby in 1943.

But Mr Dennis now has revealed the discovery of the *Centaur* was a lucky accident as they searched for the aircraft, which could be worth \$150,000 each.

Corsairs, a celebrated naval fighter with a distinctive inverted gull wing, bring up to \$750,000 fully restored.

Mr Dennis believes there are also some British aircraft still in crates, such as the Supermarine Seafire, the marine version of the famous Spitfire, but his team has so far seen only US-built planes.

They have claimed salvage rights to the discarded fighters.

The Royal Australian Navy has a minesweeper in the area conducting a sonar sweep, but authorities do not appear to be disputing ownership.

Mr Dennis has promised to present several planes to museums, including the Australian War Memorial in Canberra and the Pt Cook air museum near Melbourne.

"Financial gain is not the only thing," Mr Dennis said.

"The main motivation is historical.

"But it's been a real adventure from which we hope to make some money."

The group, which is assembling sophisticated diving and salvage equipment, expects to begin bringing the fighters to the surface within a month.

## MEDIA WATCH

# Coastal marine parks bid under attack

EXCLUSIVE

By CAROLINE MILBURN,  
environment reporter

A plan to convert 15 per cent of Victoria's coastline into marine parks has enraged the state's commercial fishing industry and set the scene for a statewide battle with conservationists.

Marine scientists yesterday attacked the plan by the Victorian Government's land advisory group and commercial fishermen deemed it as unworkable.

About five per cent of Victoria's coastline is presently covered by marine parks. But a draft report by the Land Conservation Council has proposed that this be increased to 15 per cent.

The new marine parks would stretch three nautical miles from the coast. The draft proposals have sparked fears that recreational anglers could be banned from their favorite fishing spots and commercial fishermen could be locked out of prime fishing grounds.

A spokeswoman for the Victorian Fishing Industry Federation, Ms Karen Clifton, said residents in Victorian coastal towns and the federation's 1100 members were deeply worried about the plan.

"This has caused great unrest and uncertainty in fishing communities," said Ms Clifton, the federation's executive officer. "People can see that their livelihoods will be threatened, more and more of their areas are being taken away. The marine parks will be unable to be enforced and they will become a paradise for poachers."

About 600 people are expected at a public meeting in Warrnambool tonight to debate the council's report which will be sent to the Victorian Government later this year.

But marine scientists yesterday blasted the plan for weakening protection over existing marine parks and creating bogus new parks.

Scientists said most of the new parks would be open to exploitation from fish farms, commercial fishing and mining. Only 1.4 per cent of the new parks would be designated as marine sanctuaries where all fishing would be banned.

Marine scientists said the sanctuaries were far too small and did not have total protection because exploitation for oil and gas could be allowed in them.

They said the "no take" sanctuaries were located in remote areas that would be inaccessible to the public and difficult for authorities to police.

Dr Mark Norman, a marine zoologist at Melbourne University's zoology department, said he was alarmed that the council's plan reduced protection in existing marine parks such as Pope's Eye in Port Phillip Bay and an area of Wilson's Promontory.

At present all fishing is banned in Pope's

Eye but the council's plan has raised the possibility of fishing being allowed.

"There are going to be enormous individual battles fought across the state on this and the fact that we are going backwards on these regulations is a travesty," Dr Norman said.

"You can't envisage the Land Conservation Council reducing conservation values on land by chopping bits out of national parks as they are doing here. And it would be an awful nightmare to leave the management of these parks in the hands of individual managers as is proposed."

Professor Geoff Wescott, associate professor of environmental management at Deakin University, criticised the plan for failing to include Westport bay's world-renowned sea-grass beds in the highest protection category of "no take" sanctuaries zones.

"The lack of sanctuaries zones in bays and inlets is a glaring omission," Professor Wescott said.

The Victorian Environment Minister, Mr Birrell, said it was too early to comment on the draft proposals but he welcomed the strong opinions as part of the community consultation about the plan.

A visiting New Zealand marine biologist, Dr Bill Ballantine, will speak about the merits of marine parks at public meetings in Victoria this week. New Zealand has about 14 "no take" marine parks and the Government is considering establishing about 20 more.

Dr Ballantine said the no-take parks had become extremely popu-

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lar in New Zealand after the initial fears of commercial fishing groups were overcome.

"People have realised that these places have virtually become stud farms for fish — there are anecdotal reports that fish stocks have increased on the boundaries of these areas," he said.

The chairman of the Land Conservation Council, Mr Don Saunders, welcomed public debate on the draft proposals. He said the level of protection in the various zones would depend on management plans carried out by the Department of Conservation and Natural Resources.





**DIVE/SOCIAL CALENDAR**

DATE	EVENT/LOCATION	DIVE CAPTAIN	MEET AT
10,11,12 June	Queenscliff Long Weekend at Beacon Caravan Park	Andy Mastrowicz 318 3986	Book early!
15 June	General Meeting at Bells Hotel, cnr. Moray & Coventry Sts, Sth Melbourne Guest speaker Ian Lewis		8.00pm Sharp!
25 June	Shellback Island Wilsons Prom.	Mick Jeacle (059) 71 2786	10.30am Walkerville
9 July	Heads Dive	Doug Catherall 888 7774	10.00am Sorrento
20 July	General Meeting at Bells Hotel, cnr. Moray & Coventry Sts, Sth Melbourne Guest speaker Geoff Skinner		8.00pm Sharp!
23 July	Outer Nobbies <i>CANCELLED DON</i>	John Lawler 589 4020	10.00am Flinders
6 Aug	Spectacular Reef/Heads area	Don Abell 8894415	10.00am Sorrento
17 Aug	General Meeting at Bells Hotel, cnr. Moray & Coventry Sts, Sth Melbourne		8.00pm Sharp!
20 Aug	Limestone Caves Point neapan	Bob Scott 763 6872	10.00am Sorrento
2 Sept Saturday	Night Dive Popes Eye	Leo Maybus 727 1568	3.30pm Sorrento
* 3 Sept	Fathers Day Yum Cha in Melbourne's Chinatown	Chris Llewellyn	11.30

NOTE: BOAT OWNERS PLEASE RING DIVE CAPTAIN BY 6PM -  
DIVERS PLEASE RING BETWEEN 6.30 AND 7PM