



Media Release

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Enjoy the Omeo wreck, but ‘look don’t touch’ to preserve the significant site and its sea life

The Western Australian Museum has joined the City of Cockburn to appeal for visitors to the Omeo wreck at Coogee Maritime Trail to take care of the historic site.

The popular underwater trail off Socrates Parade in North Coogee has experienced an influx of visitors in recent months as more people explore their own backyard during COVID-19 travel restrictions.

As a result, the area has been inundated with visitors, many standing on the wreck, causing damage to the fragile steel hull while also harming the marine habitat and the sea life it supports.

Western Australian Museum Curator Ross Anderson encouraged swimmers to look but don’t touch the wreck, including not climbing on it.

“We are thrilled that more people are visiting the wreck and learning about our maritime history, while encountering the incredible sea life it supports,” Dr Anderson said.

“But with the privilege of being able to access the Omeo so close to the shore, comes the responsibility to ensure we treat the natural and cultural environment with respect, especially as more people come to enjoy this unique attraction.”

The 605-ton barque-rigged iron screw steamer was built at Newcastle, England in 1858. Part of its cargo on its maiden voyage to Australia was the materials and equipment for laying the Bass Strait submarine cable.

It was driven ashore and wrecked in 1905 and is protected under the federal Underwater Cultural Heritage Act 2018.

City of Cockburn Acting Parks & Environment Manager Chris Beaton said the warmer summer months, and independent promotion of the award-winning trail, had also helped draw more people to the area as North Coogee and its marina started to become more known further afield.



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“This summer we experienced amazing snorkelling conditions almost daily throughout the peak holiday period and the increase in the trail’s popularity has happened faster than predicted,” Mr Beaton said.

“We are currently undertaking long-term management measures for this site including monitoring of visitor numbers and reviewing signage.”

Mr Beaton also reminded people that fishing and boating were not allowed in the area.

The Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development (Fisheries) declared the area a no fishing zone in September 2017 to complement the Department of Transport (DoT) boating restriction.

The waters around the Trail – aligning with the no fishing zone as marked by the three yellow buoys – and along Coogee Beach within 100m of the shore down to Coogee Jetty, are closed to motorised vessels.

Information about the history and significance of the Omeo is on the WA Museum [website](#) and details of the Coogee Maritime Trail are on the City of Cockburn [website](#).

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