

Media Release

19 January 2022

Look but don't touch fragile Omeo shipwreck to save it for future generations

The City of Cockburn is reminding visitors to the Omeo shipwreck at Coogee Maritime Trail (CMT) to take care of the historic site.

Last year the Western Australian Museum joined the City to appeal to people visiting the shipwreck to stop standing on, jumping off or touching the fragile structure which is covered in coral and aquatic plants that provide a habitat for sea life.

This year the underwater trail off Socrates Parade in North Coogee continues to experience an influx of visitors as the site becomes more well-known across Perth, and as people continue to explore their own backyard during COVID-19 travel restrictions.

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

"We are thrilled 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 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."

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

"The City is undertaking long-term management measures for this site including monitoring of visitor numbers and reviewing signage," Mr Beaton said.

"The City plans to erect signage in coming weeks informing people that adversely impacting or harming the wreck is an offence under the

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Commonwealth Underwater Cultural Heritage Act 2018.”

Mr Beaton also reminded people that fishing and boating were not allowed inside the designated no fishing and no boating zone.

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.

The City recently received a \$21,725 grant from the State Government’s Recreational Boating Facilities Scheme to instal three public moorings between the Eco Shark Barrier and the CMT.

“These new visitor moorings will be located just outside the no boating area. Formalising the visitor moorings will enable boats to moor at a safe distance from the maritime trail without entering prohibited areas.”

The 605-tonne 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.

More information about the history and significance of the Omeo is on the WA Museum [website opens in a new window](#) and details of the Coogee Maritime Trail are on the City of Cockburn [website opens in a new window](#).

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