

The Committee Secretary, Joint Standing Committee on Treaties jsct@aph.gov.au

17 March 2022

Dear Sir/Madam,

I am writing as an individual (Maddy McAllister), to support the adoption of the 2001 UNESCO *Convention on the Protection of Underwater Cultural Heritage*. I believe that the Convention is an excellent aspect of international cooperation, collaboration and a tool to ensure we preserve our heritage for future generations around the world.

Growing up on the coast, I spent much of my time at the beach or in the ocean, learning, exploring and enjoying the incredible coastlines we have around Australia. In my highschool years, I begged my parents to get me a SCUBA diving course for my 15th birthday and I spent the summer exploring more underwater than I ever imagined.

By the end of high school, I dreamt of becoming a marine biologist, yet I soon learnt that there was an amazing side of heritage in Australia that few knew about. Beneath the waves lies hundreds of years of heritage in the form of shipwrecks, aircraft wrecks and historical structures. Looking further than that we have many millennia of heritage from First Nations people around our coastline.

I have spent the past 14 years pursuing a career in maritime archaeology – to study, protect and conserve our unique and diverse underwater cultural heritage. One clear theme throughout my studies was a sense of pride in Australia as a country that led the way for protection of our shipwrecks and robust legislation in the 1970s that ensured our heritage was preserved for future generations. Yet, underlying all of this was the growing sense of shame that by the turn of the century we had fallen behind the pack and had not become a State Party to the UNECO Convention. Complications aligning our original Commonwealth *Historic Shipwrecks Act 1976* to the convention no longer exist under the new Commonwealth *Underwater Cultural Heritage Act 2018*.

We are at a turning point.

Emerging technologies are both a gift and a hazard for sites that lie beneath the waves. Although we have made incredible discoveries in recent years, we have also faced devastating loses – like the destruction of HMAS Perth in Indonesian waters. Once lost, these finite resources are lost.

Adopting the Convention, enables us to have a multilateral framework for to work with neighbouring countries to deal with, and control activities involving, underwater cultural heritage outside of our own We can once again become leaders in underwater cultural heritage and play a role as a supportive, co-operative State Party in our geographical region and on the global stage.

I strongly support Australia ratifying the 2011 UNESCO *Convention on the Protection of Underwater Cultural Heritage*.

Sincerely,



Dr Maddy McAllister
(PhD, MMar, BArch)