

Building Capacity in the South West Pacific – The Norfolk Island Maritime Archaeological Association

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Abstract:

The Australian Government Department of the Environment and Energy administers the Commonwealth Historic Shipwrecks Act 1976 and the National Historic Shipwrecks Program. This Program enables the Department to work with the States, the Northern Territory and Norfolk Island to protect historic shipwrecks.

With the wealth of maritime history on Norfolk Island and the strong associations with Pitcairn Island, the potential for involving the broader community in documenting and protecting Norfolk Island's wonderful maritime heritage is significant. In 2010, at the request of the Norfolk Island Delegate, the first in a series of community focussed capacity building activities in maritime archaeology was conducted on the island. These activities resulted in the creation of the Norfolk Island Maritime Archaeological Association (NIMAA), Australia's newest maritime archaeology association.

This paper briefly outlines the history of maritime archaeological associations in Australia and their engagement with management agencies. As a case study for other small island communities, the paper highlights some of the activities of NIMAA since its creation, issues faced for participants and the management agency and the potential for NIMAA into the future.

Key words: NIMAA, Norfolk Island, maritime archaeology associations, public archaeology, community engagement, historic shipwrecks

Introduction

The management of shipwrecks in Australia balances protecting historic shipwrecks with maintaining public access for recreational, scientific and

educational purposes. Objectives of the 1983 Historic Shipwrecks Program (HSP), the vehicle to coordinate the national collaborative administration of the *Historic Shipwrecks Act 1976* (the Act), include: the support of an informed public for historic shipwrecks as a cultural resource; undertaking fieldwork including shipwreck survey, excavation and monitoring; and community engagement (Viduka, 2012). This provision has been echoed in Article 20 of the UNESCO 2001 *Convention on the Protection of the Underwater Cultural Heritage*.

Of Australia's approximately 7500 - 8000 protected Historic Shipwrecks, 23 lie within protected or no-entry zones without permit (Historic Shipwrecks Protected Zones 2017). The remaining sites can be dived without permit if that activity does not cause damage, disturbance or removal of material from the site. Divers are encouraged and can use wreck sites for recreational purposes but the physical fabric of the wreck must not be disturbed and relics must not be removed from the site without a permit (Viduka, 2015).

Due to the small number of professional maritime archaeologists and the vast amount of coastal waters around Australia, it has always been obvious that little can be done by the professional maritime archaeological community alone to: locate; document; assess the significance of; monitor; protect; stabilise and research this large distributed assemblage. A core reality of underwater cultural heritage management in Australia is that community support and community participation in the monitoring or discovery of vessels is critical to achieving the objectives of discovering and protecting underwater cultural heritage. To support such an outcome, strong community based programmes that improve the public's access to, knowledge and enjoyment of their underwater heritage is vital (Hosty, 1987; McCarthy and Garrett, 1998; Nutley, 1998; Smith, 2006; Styne, 2010; Viduka and Raupp, 2008).

Management agencies around Australia have developed a range of different communication and engagement strategies to facilitate public access and inform the public of their heritage. These strategies include: online databases (with detail on the history, location and diving conditions of each site) (NSW Maritime Heritage Database, 2017; WA Shipwrecks Database, 2017; Vic Heritage Database, 2017; SA Shipwrecks Database, 2017; Australian Government Shipwrecks Database, 2017); websites, brochures, posters and books (Nash, 2007; Henderson, 1986 and 2016); accurate historical and site data provided to commercial dive charter industries; community based interactive programs (NSW Wreckspotters, 2015; Queensland Survey, 2015; Viduka and Raupp, 2008); and the development of dive trails (Philippou and Staniforth, 2003). A fundamental element in the strategy of promoting community participation is the development and support for vocational maritime archaeology groups.

Maritime Archaeological Associations in Australia

Australian management agencies initially put significant time and resources into fostering the establishment of local maritime archaeological associations. The 1994 Australian Government *Guidelines for the Management of Australia's Historic Shipwrecks* includes details on how to foster and support the development of archaeological associations. The 1996 Australian Government *Public Access Guidelines*, specifically state that community groups can undertake disturbance activities subject to meeting specific criteria in training in maritime archaeology. This extended to private and public groups and institutions including local historical and archaeological societies, regional community museums and affiliated groups under the direction of a person qualified in maritime archaeology (Australian Government, 1996).

Given the strong contemporary policy framework in Australia limiting the granting of permits for the recovery of relics by private individuals or groups without conservation and collection management resources, many community groups, often known as Maritime Archaeological Associations, focused their activities into locating shipwrecks and or survey of known resources. Many of these groups were instrumental in a jurisdiction being able to undertake more extensive fieldwork activities, such as excavation, but under the direction of a qualified maritime archaeologist.

Over time, many of these associations not only planned and undertook their own research, but also became the backbone of their jurisdiction's fieldwork program, supplying divers with: practical, historical and nautical knowledge; a vast depth of diving experience; boat handling skills; medical and safety skills; and training in archaeological methodology. Notable amongst these groups is the Maritime Archaeological Association of Victoria (MAAV, 2017) and the Maritime Archaeological Association of Western Australia (MAAWA, 2017). The relationship between management agency and community group was so symbiotic, that at times, the strength of a jurisdiction's management was indicated by the activity of the local community group.

Other maritime archaeological associations existed in: South Australia (Society for Underwater Historical Research) (SUHR) which was renamed the South Australian Archaeology Society in 2012; Tasmania (Maritime Archaeological Association of Tasmania) (MAAT) (Lester, 1983a, 1983b); and Queensland (Maritime Archaeological Association of Queensland) (MAAQ, 2015) however these are no longer active. A common thread amongst all these groups was some level of active involvement or support by the relevant State Historic Shipwrecks Practitioner.

A feature of the last decade or so is that new groups have appeared on their own volition, with a specific area of research interest. Southern Ocean Exploration (SOE, 2017) and the Sydney Project (Sydney Project, 2017) are notable examples of groups who like both technical diving and discovering shipwrecks. Other groups such as Wreck Check Incorporated are interested in searching for, locating and documenting underwater cultural heritage related to or shared with Australia (Wreck Check, 2017; Fortuyn Project, 2017).

Unlike other Australian jurisdictions Norfolk Island has never had the permanent support of a local professional maritime archaeologist. The Delegate for the Historic Shipwrecks Act, who is located within the Norfolk Island Museum, has relied on external organisations or individuals to assist them in undertaking their delegated responsibilities to sites and associated recovered artefacts. Recognising a need for a local capacity to assist in the delivery of day to day delegated responsibilities, the Norfolk Island Delegate supported the idea of building maritime archaeological capacity within the local community. The value of such an approach was immediately recognised as delivering positive outcomes on three principle levels: community engagement, management and museological. Harking back to the earliest model of fostering a community maritime archaeological association to support a jurisdiction's management goals, in 2012 Australia's most recent Maritime Archaeological Association was formed, called the Norfolk Island Maritime Archaeological Association (NIMAA).

Norfolk Island – a maritime landscape

Norfolk Island is located in the Southwest Pacific approximately 1700 kilometres northeast of Sydney, at 167°57'E, 29°02'S. The island has an approximate area of 37 km² and a population estimated between

2000 to 3000 individuals. To the south of Norfolk Island are two smaller islands, Nepean and Phillip (Fig. 1). All the islands are formed from horizontal sheets of basalt with Mount Bates on Norfolk Island as the highest point, rising to 319 metres above sea level (Geosciences Australia, 2017).



Fig. 1 (left): Map of Norfolk Island. (naming bays and locations mentioned in text) (Australian Government)

Norfolk Island has several phases of occupation. Excavations around Emily Bay, on the south-central coast, identified occupation of the island by people of Polynesian ancestry circa the 13th/14th through to the 15th century AD (Anderson and White, 2001). The island was located by Captain James Cook in 1774 and was identified for its strategic value and economic potential in timber and flax. In the 19th century a British penal settlement was established near Emily Bay now known as the UNESCO World Heritage listed Kingston and Arthur's Vale Historic Area. After the

closure of the penal settlement in 1855 the island was subsequently occupied in 1856 by people relocated from the Pitcairn Islands. With the arrival of the Pitcairners, many with Tahitian ancestry, Norfolk Island again became a community thread in the tapestry of Pacific Island cultures. Today, many Norfolk Islanders are intrinsically a part of the Pacific with strong cultural and familial links.

The mid to late 19th and early 20th century Norfolk Island population comprised of subsistence farmers, whose only hope of deriving an income was through exporting agricultural products predominantly to either mainland Australia or New Zealand. Intermittent services by shipping companies, further exacerbated by the First World War, often resulted in total spoilage and loss of products. Other than agriculture the only major industry on the island was shore based whaling which occurred between 1858 and the early 1950's. In 1942 at the height of World War II in the southwest Pacific, the island became a strategic airbase and was occupied by New Zealand troops. A radar station was located on Mount Bates. Prior to the airbase's construction shipping was the only transport to and from the island. Fishing from rocks and boats remains a very popular activity both for food and recreation.

The underwater cultural heritage resource and community engagement

In 2009, recognising the operational limitations on the Historic Shipwrecks Delegate, the Department engaged Cosmos Archaeology to undertake a desktop review of shipwrecks around Norfolk Island for updating records in the Australian National Shipwrecks Database (ANSDB) (Luckman and Viduka, 2013). Prior to this desktop survey, most maritime archaeological activity had focussed on the National Heritage listed site of HMS *Sirius* (1790), unofficial flagship to Australia's First Fleet, and its associated

artefacts on display at the Norfolk Island Museum (Henderson and Stanbury, 1986; Stanbury, 2002 and 2007). Through the desktop project new information, media and archival material was collated for several sites. The ANSDB now includes approximately twenty-six sites around Norfolk Island which are recorded as sinking from 1790 – 1960's (Fig. 2).

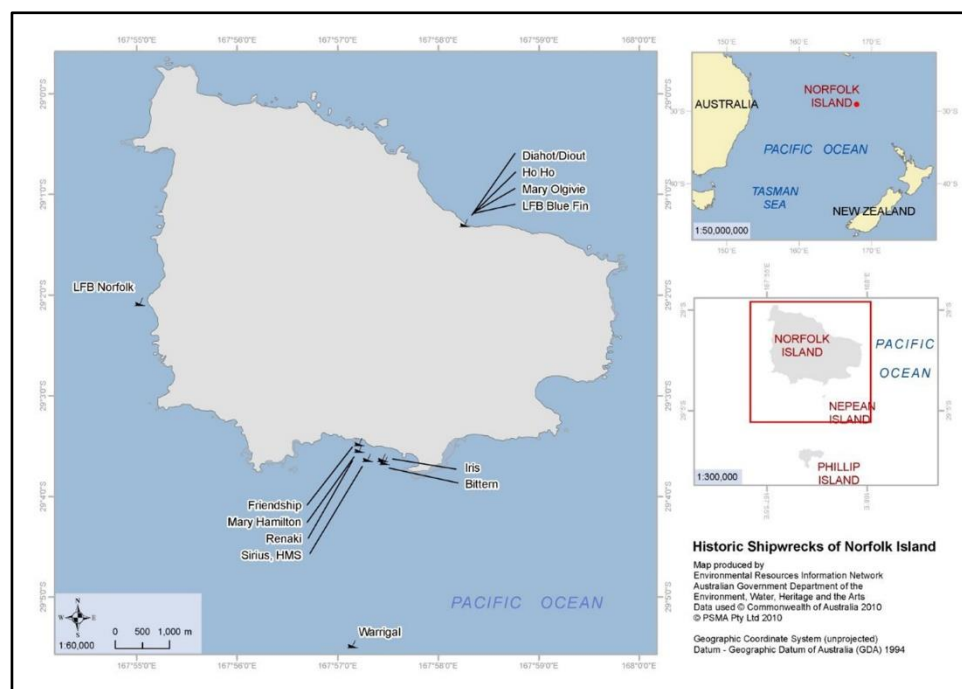


Fig. 2: Map indicating the distribution of the known shipwreck resource around Norfolk Island and their approximate locations. (Australian Government)

To help build an informed and supportive community group who could assist the Delegate, an Australasian Institute of Maritime Archaeology modified Nautical Archaeology Society (AIMA/NAS) training course part 1 (Nautical Archaeology Society, 2013; Philippou and Staniforth 2003) was delivered to 25 participants. The AIMA/NAS course was presented in 2010 by Cassandra Philippou, Sarah Ward and myself (Fig. 3) (Norfolk Island Museum, 2017; AIMA, 2017; AIMA NAS, 2017). This course was very successful in bringing many individuals of the community together on a subject of shared interest. The enthusiasm of the individuals involved led directly to their creation of NIMAA. This paper looks at NIMAA and the

challenges for that group as a case study for other small island communities.



*Fig. 3 (left): AIMA/NAS training 2D survey.
(Andrew Viduka)*

A shaky start

Following the creation of NIMAA, economic downturn on the island drove many diving members to the Australian mainland or elsewhere for work opportunities. At the request of the Delegate, who recognised that the group's existence was immediately imperiled, from 22 February to 1 March 2013, a small team of maritime archaeologists were engaged to work with NIMAA members and undertake a maritime archaeological survey of Ball Bay and other coastal sites around Norfolk Island. The maritime archaeology team comprised Dr Brad Duncan (State Maritime Archaeologist, New South Wales), Mr Amer Khan (Maritime Heritage Officer South Australia) and myself (Australian Government).

2013 NIMAA Ball Bay Survey

Due to the limited anchorage or landing options at Norfolk Island, Ball Bay is constantly being considered for future development by Norfolk

Islanders. To assist development consideration and for science based heritage management decision making an understanding of the potential for underwater cultural material in Ball Bay was required to be made. To that end a physical and remote sensing survey of the bay was planned. The intent of this collaboration with NIMAA was fourfold:

- to help inform discussion and decision making on Norfolk Island regarding this site so the Delegate could be well placed to protect the maritime heritage of the island if present;
- provide further practical archaeological training for NIMAA in underwater and terrestrial archaeological field techniques;
- empower NIMAA to continue archaeological surveys around the island and lead in the recording of previously undocumented heritage sites; and
- to galvanize activity in NIMAA.

Historically known activities in Ball Bay include a shore-based whaling station from 1935-39. Remains of the processing plant are still in situ. However, the bay has a longer history of use, starting circa 1788/9 when Captain Philip Gidley King, then lieutenant-governor of Norfolk Island, attempted to build a pier. Anecdotal accounts suggest even an earlier use of the bay by Polynesians. The Director of the Norfolk Island Museum reported anecdotal accounts of the recovery of some Polynesian cultural material, possibly dating to the pre-history settlement period (Pers com Lisa Richards 17 May 2012).

Due to bad weather, only two days of underwater surveys could be completed in Ball Bay though some in water survey training was conducted in the calm of Emily Bay and an inspection snorkel over the site of HMS *Sirius* was achieved with NIMAA members (Fig. 4). Activity

switched to teaching and doing oral history recordings with locals. Selected individuals who were described by Dr Duncan as having ‘deep familial and direct knowledge of sites’ and other island maritime industries on boat building, defence, whaling and transport were interviewed (Duncan 2012) (Fig. 5). Further, several sites were surveyed and recorded including: the Mt Bates Military Radar Defence Station; an incised marking on stone associated with HMS *Calliope*’s visit in 1888; and a World War II bunker in Anson Bay overlooking the landing point of the 1902 telegraph cable that connected Canada and Australia.

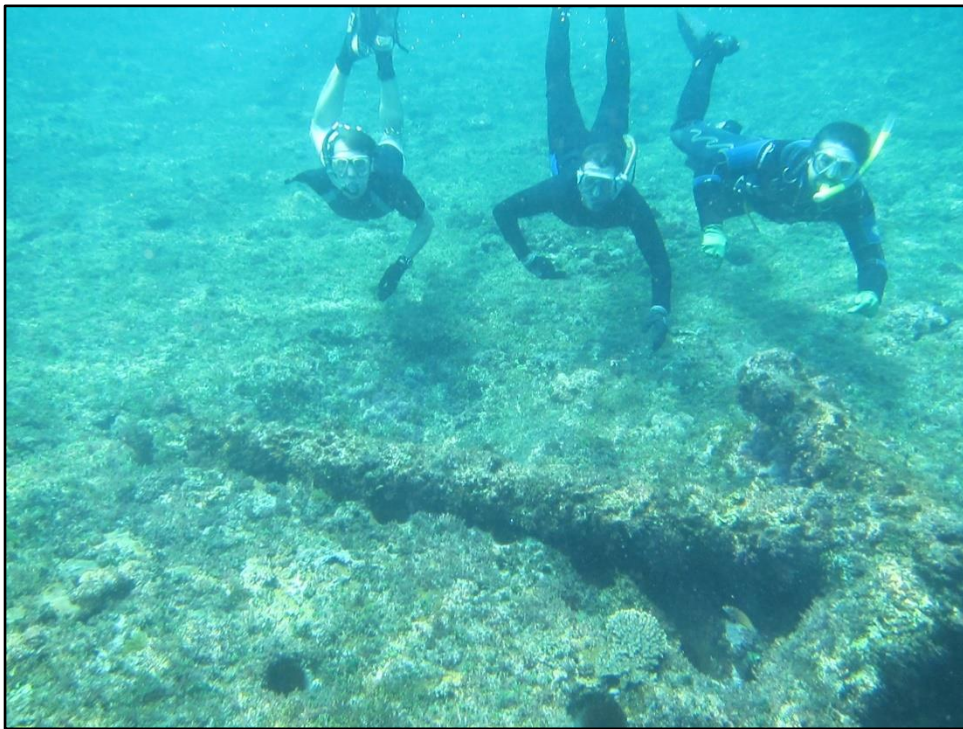


Fig. 4: HMS Sirius (1790) last anchor on site relocated and inspected by NIMAA members. (Andrew Viduka)



Fig. 5: Oral history interview on Norfolk Island whaling heritage in Ball Bay. (Andrew Viduka)

2013 NIMAA Cascade Bay

In the perennial search for improved lightering or anchorage conditions on Norfolk Island, in May 2013, at the request of the administration of Norfolk Island who were considering possible improvements to Cascade Pier, NIMAA undertook an underwater survey for cultural material in the proposed development and associated works footprint. Cascade Pier is located on the northern coast of Norfolk Island in an unsheltered bay. Due to the rugged coastal conditions, all produce and supplies must be lightered to and from vessels anchored off shore. Cascade Bay is one of two contemporary locations used on Norfolk Island, the other being Sydney Bay/Slaughter Bay. Both are subject to weather.

NIMAA planned, coordinated and carried out the survey with available diving members. The survey was conducted on Sunday 19 May 2013. Based on a brief supplied by Alan McNeil, Manager, Land Use & Environment, Administration of Norfolk Island, the area to be surveyed

was identified using Global Positioning equipment and marked with ropes and buoys which were used as reference points. While no artefacts were found in the area surveyed, NIMAA divers on SCUBA methodically searched the designated sea floor (Fig 6) (Norfolk Island Maritime Archaeology Association 2013). NIMAA's work contributed directly to a positive community outcome and the Pier upgrade commenced in 2016 (Norfolk Island News, 2017).



Fig. 6: NIMAA members first sweep swimming north on the eastern side of survey area 40 M off the pier. (Courtesy of NIMAA)

Since 2013 NIMAA members have been involved in other terrestrial projects than those mentioned in this paper including a remote sensing archaeological survey project led by Dr Duncan and Dr Martin Gibbs (University of New England). However, outside of externally generated projects or terrestrial and museological activity little has been reported that suggests NIMAA remains an active underwater group driven by internal initiative.

Potential for NIMAA into the future

As with many other small island communities, the remoteness of the island has been the primary cause of much joy and difficulty for Norfolk Islanders and it is this thread that may be best exploited to deliver an exciting project for NIMAA that will engage the broader community.

Certainly, the success or not of NIMAA resides with its members, their individual enthusiasm and the support they receive from the Historic Shipwrecks Delegate and, in general, the Australian Government's Historic Shipwrecks Program. As outlined above, volunteer associations are vulnerable to change and will cease to operate. In the case of the MAAQ, which ceased to operate in 2016, changing demographics of the group, few new members, the ability of existing members to volunteer time and insurance issues restricting fieldwork all combined to make the group inoperable (Pers Com Paddy Waterson 6 June 2017). It is worth highlighting that Queensland is Australia's 3rd most populous state and most popular dive tourism location for domestic and inbound tourism. Yet, even in this setting, a maritime archaeology volunteer association withered and collapsed.

On Norfolk Island, NIMAA has many keen and capable members. The entire island is a maritime landscape and everyone is intrinsically a part of that story. However, it is not yet certain if their individual enthusiasm will result in a coordinated community approach to projects of shared interest. The greatest hope for the longevity of NIMAA is with the strong and ongoing support of the Norfolk Island Museum, which has undergone recent organisational change and restructuring, and the Norfolk Island Historic Shipwrecks Delegate.

Separate to the activities that NIMAA members themselves may pursue in regards to whaling and military heritage, other opportunities do exist to engage participants in their underwater heritage.

Collaboration with other researchers

Collaboration with other maritime archaeological groups or seeking opportunities to join projects in other jurisdictions is open to NIMAA members. One example of this is a project proposed by Wreck Check Inc, chaired by Graeme Henderson. Wreck Check will collaborate with NIMAA in 2017/2018. This project proposes to reassess why was the *Sirius* wrecked? Arguably the infant Australian colony's most threatening single incident. NIMAA members will be doing photogrammetry of the *Sirius* ballast mound for calculation of the residual weight (Fulton et al 2016) and approximate determination of stowage area in the vessel. This data will be used to consider the potential impact of insufficient ballasting as a contributing factor to the vessel's loss.

Other future project – *Resolution*?

As briefly described earlier, to break their isolation from external markets and remedy the lack of reliable shipping services to Norfolk Island, circa 1917 the Norfolk Island Shipping Company purchased the ketch *Warrigal* (ANSDB Shipwreck ID 7958). After one successful voyage, the vessel was lost with all hands in a cyclone. This vessel has not been relocated.

Still faced with the same isolation and lack of reliable shipping issues, in 1923 the Norfolk Island Farmers and Growers Association resolved to build their own ship which they named *Resolution*. The Norfolk Island Museum describes the construction of the vessels:

“It was difficult to source the resources needed to build a boat. Men searched the valleys for timbers with natural bends to make the stern and ribs. A Norfolk Island Pine was selected for the keel, providing a 20-metre log that was dragged to the building site at Emily Bay. There it was pit-sawn, adzed to shape and squared up. Norfolk Pine was also used for the keel and planking, while the framing was of island grown olive and ironwood. She was built as

a stout auxiliary schooner of about 60 tons and more than 18 metres in length.” (Norfolk Island Museum, 2017)

Sadly, for the Norfolk Islanders the *Resolution*, which was launched in December 1925 and subsequently fitted with a diesel motor, was sold in 1927 to Burns Philp (South Seas) due to their financial inability to operate the vessel. For the next 20 years, the *Resolution* worked on the Tonga, Fiji and New Hebrides (now Vanuatu) trades. In March 1948, the vessel was disabled by a cyclone and in 1949 *Resolution* sank at moorings in the harbour at Port Villa in 36 meters. While the site has been actively and continuously pillaged by recreational divers, this site is one of many shared heritage sites between Norfolk Island/Australia more broadly and Vanuatu that could form the basis of a collaborative maritime archaeological project between NIMAA members and the people of Vanuatu to the benefits for both island communities.

Conclusion and observations

It is an established truism that community engagement in heritage is vital for better heritage management outcomes. Certainly the creation of NIMAA by interested individuals on Norfolk Island has stimulated activity and greater knowledge in the community. While it is dangerous to extrapolate too much from this singular example, certain observations warrant consideration for their potential value to others who are considering developing a community based underwater cultural heritage capacity in a small island community.

Threats

All volunteer groups face a common threat, competing activities for the attention of members. While this is not unique to small island communities, a complication for individuals on small islands, in particular,

is that they are often involved in multiple concurrent positions to derive an income/subsistence.

Financial support

Financial support will assist any group to continue to operate. Without some form of financial support being available, any group's personal resources may not be able to sustain activity over the long term. In a small island community where individuals may have less income, external funding is vital.

For NIMAA members, they are fortunate in that they have two options for funding assistance, via the Delegate or through competitive grants offered to small community museums through the Australian National Maritime Museum. Without the opportunity to obtain external funding, the long term viability of NIMAA would be in serious doubt.

A local champion/s

Two types of champions were required to create and sustain NIMAA. In the first instance it was the support of the Delegate who championed the creation of NIMAA. The Delegate recognised the need to have an engaged and empowered community on Norfolk Island to participate in underwater cultural heritage. Once NIMAA was created it was important that individuals within NIMAA took a leadership role and championed activities within the group.

Based on observations with NIMAA, it is important to recognise that the role of the Delegate who initially championed the creation of NIMAA does not cease. Their active and ongoing support is required to sustain an individual's enthusiasm and or the group's effectiveness. Further, the leadership role within a group should be shared otherwise this becomes a constraining factor to the groups effectiveness.

Links to a cultural institution/management agency

At least initially, the group would benefit from being linked to an appropriate institution so that their activities have some oversight and official support. This not only helps build trust between individuals responsible for the protection of underwater cultural heritage but ensures the group's ethical development. It advantageously also assists the group to seek funding support for their activities.

Research potential – an active program

A critical element to maintaining activity is to have projects that are initiated by the group, achievable and interesting to the individuals in the group. While Norfolk Island has enormous research potential, it is yet to be ascertained if NIMAA members will develop their own research program.

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Biography



Andrew Viduka is a maritime archaeologist and conservator employed by the Australian Government as the Assistant Director Maritime Heritage. In this role he leads Australia's consideration of ratification of the UNESCO 2001 *Convention on the Protection of the Underwater Cultural Heritage*. Andrew is actively involved in maritime archaeological projects and or capacity building training in

Australia, the Pacific and the Mediterranean Regions. Andrew's research currently focuses on linking community outcomes with the discovery and protection of Australia's underwater cultural heritage, shared heritage management and international capacity building

projects. He is a foundation member of the research group Wreck Check Inc.

