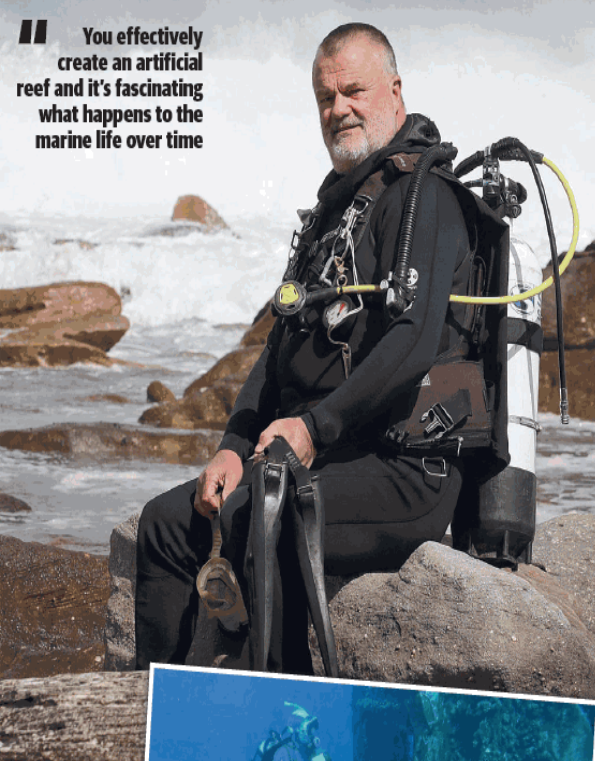


COOGEE

# Ship for dive wreck might just have sailed through the Heads



**|| You effectively create an artificial reef and it's fascinating what happens to the marine life over time**

John Rowe prepares for a dive at Gordons Bay, Coogee, where he wants to sink a former navy vessel as an underwater attraction. At right is a dive wreck at the town of 1770, northern Queensland.



Campaign supported by 10,000 signatures, MPs

**Angela Mollard**

JOHN Rowe has a dream of scuba diving on a shipwreck off Gordons Bay, Coogee.

And his ingenious idea might just have sailed through the Sydney Heads in the form of HMAS Darwin, the navy's oldest guided-missile frigate, which will be decommissioned on Sunday.

Mr Rowe has spent countless hours collecting almost 10,000 signatures on a petition calling for just such a ship to be sunk 4km off the beach.

He is confident the wreck would create an underwater environment which would draw visitors and cash to Randwick city for the next 100 years.

He said the area east of Coogee's Wedding Cake Island was ideal for the site because it had a bare, sandy bottom deep enough to ensure the vessel was stable, there were no extreme currents and it was outside shipping lanes.

"You effectively create an artificial reef and it's fascinating what happens to the marine life over time," he said. "There are seven dive wrecks in Australia but none in Sydney. With so many visitors coming through the city we believe a dive wreck could generate up to \$10 million income per annum."

A former policeman, 71-year-old Mr Rowe lived in Clovelly for 35 years before recently moving to the

**Grand journey**



**IT HAS been a grand journey for HMAS Darwin - 33 years of service in the Indian Ocean, Asia and Pacific region, covering a million nautical miles. More than 5000 men and women have served on her as she visited 50 countries - and the Middle East seven times. Last year she seized 2000 AK-47 rifles and an \$800 million heroin shipment.**

cause divers would set off from the charter company offices.

"This would be a real asset for all," Mr Rowe said. "It's good for tourists, business and locals. This will encourage people to be more active and get off their phones."

Local MPs Bruce Nottley-Smith of Coogee and Michael Daley of Maroubra support the Gordons Bay Scuba Diving Club's campaign.

"It's a great idea that will increase the attractiveness of Sydney, especially to interstate and international visitors who are time poor. It'll also provide a fantastic fish habitat," Mr Nottley-Smith said.

"John is working really hard to get sufficient demonstration of public support and then it's a case of convincing the bean counters that it's a sustainable proposition."

In the meantime, Mr Rowe is well on the way to obtaining 10,000 signatures so his proposal can be tabled in the NSW Parliament.

Traditionally, decommissioned ships are used for target practise, sold and stripped for scrap metal or sent to museums as maritime artefacts.

And while the navy has not indicated the fate of HMAS Darwin, Mr Rowe said the "value achieved by these one-off options does not compare with the life-long revenue for a ship sunk as a dive wreck".

southern highlands. But he returns regularly to dive with Gordons Bay Scuba Diving Club.

He said that, unlike a shipwreck, which was sunk as the result of an accident or misadventure, a dive wreck was sunk intentionally as a recreational resource.

He envisages divers being charged \$250 a day with dive charter operators offering a series of dive locations including the wreck, Maroubra's Magic Point, Wedding Cake Island and Shark Point in Clovelly.

Local roads and carparks would not be affected be-

## The Perfect Christmas Gift

Treat them to a gift subscription this Christmas for \$49.95 or under!

**ORDER NOW!**

visit [magsonline.com.au/xmas2017](http://magsonline.com.au/xmas2017) or call 1300 656 933 and quote M17xmas1

V1 - SCOE01201MA

SOUTHERN COURIER, Tuesday, December 5, 2017 03

