



Gabrielle Upton
Heritage Minister

MEDIA RELEASE

Friday, 30 June 2017

MIDGET SUBMARINE WRECK DIVE BALLOT

For the first time selected members of the public will have permission to dive to the Japanese midget submarine M24 wreck off Sydney's northern beaches as part of a ballot, NSW Heritage Minister Gabrielle Upton announced today.

The public dive open day, scheduled for November, will remember the people who died the night the Japanese midget submarines entered Sydney Harbour.

"This year marks the 75th anniversary and the one and only time Sydney has come under attack – it's a significant moment in Australia's history," Ms Upton said.

"This dive ballot is a rare opportunity for people to visit an underwater site of international heritage significance in a respectful and sensitive way."

Two groups of six will be chosen from the ballot to dive the site in November to coincide with the 11th anniversary of the M24 site's discovery.

The NSW Office of Environment and Heritage and the Commonwealth Department of the Environment and Energy have managed and protected the site as a restricted zone since the No Frills Divers' group discovered the site in November 2006. The M24 site is the only remaining midget submarine from the 1942 attack located in situ underwater. It remains the grave for the two Japanese submariners.

On 31 May 1942, 21 sailors were killed aboard the navy depot ship HMAS Kuttabul along with six Japanese submariners aboard three midget submarines.

"Giving people the chance to see this site from a respectful distance will help highlight the heritage significance of the site – this is a rare chance to see part of Sydney's and the nation's history," Ms Upton said.

There have been years of detailed archaeological surveys and conservation works to stabilise the site, and extensive consultation has been undertaken with the Commonwealth and Japanese governments, the Royal Australian Navy and the NSW Water Police. The dive will be conducted according to strict protections under federal and state laws – there are penalties of up to \$1.1million for disturbing the M24 site.

The ballot is a trial. To register to go to <http://www.environment.nsw.gov.au/M24/> or for more information call [9873 8500](tel:98738500). The M24 submarine site is at a depth of 54 metres. Divers should consider their ability to dive at this level.