

SDFSFA Newsletter – August 2026

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SCUBA DIVERS FEDERATION OF SA, Inc.

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SDFSFA Patron:
Dr. Richard Harris



Soon to be our new wreck site: The MV Andrew Wilson. Photo by Steve Reynolds

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It's Official! The MV Andrew Wilson will soon be our next wreck dive!

The Minister for Infrastructure & Transport, the Hon. Joe Szakacs announced 1 August 2026 the scuttling of the *MV Andrew Wilson*. Currently on the hard stand the vessel has undergone extensive preparation to make it environmentally and diver safe. Preparations are still continuing. She will be scuttled at a depth of 20 metres, 6km west of Brighton Beach, sometime within the next two months. With a draw of 16 metres, the site will have varying depths making it ideal for divers of all skill levels.



Dimensions		Particulars	
Length (m)	40.23	Type	Work Vessel
Beam (m)	9.3	Date Built	1962
Depth (m)	3.43	Vessel ID	10457
Draft (m)	2.6	Survey	Class 2C
		UVI Number	454068
Engines		Capacities	
Type (Main)	Inboard	Crew numbers	4-5
Make	Caterpillar (3412TA)	Passengers	7
Power	380kW	DWT (t)	360
Other	Bow & Stern Thrusters	Deck capacity (t)	-
Make	Danfoss	Water (l)	16,000 (Fresh)
Model	KVEB1402 & 972-050006	Diesel fuel (l)	25,000
Generators	x4		
Deck Gear			
Crane	12T Elmdex Crane	Hydraulic Winch (t)	8 (x3)
Mooring Anchors	x4	Optional	150T Kobelco 7150 Crawler Crane

Scuba Divers Federation of SA is proud to have been involved in the selection of the location and has had significant input into the preparation of the vessel to ensure there are adequate entry and exit points throughout the vessel to ensure safe diving for all.

We thank Maritime Constructions and the SA govt. for making this possible.

As posted in SA Dive Sites by SDFSA Committee Member Heather Petty: This is *"a great example of how the Scuba Divers Federation is working for SA Divers. Congratulations on the collaborative*

approach with other interested parties such as Recfish SA and drawing together the relevant working group expertise including SAPOL to make this wreck a safe one to dive on in the future."

Thanks to the SDFSAs working group members Helena Wescombe-Down, who handled the negotiations with the State, and Chris Dean, Tony Leggatt, Marc Berry and Mark Tozer, who assisted with the work into choosing the site and have advised extensively on the work necessary to prepare the *Andrew Wilson* to be safe for diving.

Sea Star Awards and Splash Inn 14 August

If you haven't got your free tickets yet on Eventbrite, book now! Nearly sold out – Josh Richards, presenting **"Mud, Mayhem, & Soup Spoons - Inside the Laos Cave Rescue"**. We will also be announcing the winners of SDFSAs 2026 Sea Star Awards. <https://www.eventbrite.com/e/splash-inn-009-inside-the-laos-cave-rescue-with-josh-richards-tickets-1993453268388>

Divers Needed to Survey Razorfish

Friends of Gulf St Vincent are concerned that Razorfish, *Pinna dolabrata* populations in the Gulf St Vincent are now particularly vulnerable post the recent algal bloom. Their surveys locally of intertidal colonies around Adelaide and anecdotal reports from the western shores of Gulf St Vincent indicate decimation of these major filter feeders in the intertidal zone.

They are requesting the assistance of SDFSAs members and the broader diving community to assist them to assess the viability of razorfish beds within the subtidal zone waters of Gulf St Vincent less than 10 metres depth. Friends of Gulf St Vincent are offering two rewards, one for eastern Gulf St Vincent and one for the western side, to identify, locate and film viable razorfish beds in subtidal waters. Contact friendsofgulfstvincent@gmail.com for details on the terms and conditions for the two rewards. Friends of Gulf St Vincent would also welcome reports of algal bloom affected colonies across all dive sites.

Divers Needed to Survey Invasive Marine Species – Carpet Sea Squirt



Researchers from Macquarie University (MU) are conducting a study on marine biosecurity in Australia, with a specific focus on the invasive species *Didemnum vexillum* (aka Carpet Sea Squirt). The study is part of a wider research and development program funded by the Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry with the aim of improving this species management capability.

Didemnum vexillum has been detected in several locations in Australia. MU are seeking the perspective of divers through a simple questionnaire, to help inform future biosecurity preparedness and management for this species. The survey will take approximately 15-20 minutes and all responses are confidential and anonymous. The survey

includes questions about:

- Your understanding of *Didemnum vexillum* and other marine pests.
- The impacts *Didemnum vexillum* could have on your sector.
- Suggestions on management and response approaches.
- Preparedness for, and willingness to contribute to, future management responses

To take part in the survey, please click this link:

https://mqedu.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_ebUXzUjeVVNZzIG

SDFSA Wine Fundraiser Underway

It's that time of year again! The water's a little too chilly for many of us to be scuba diving, so why not stay warm this winter with a glass of great wine while supporting the Federation?

Our **Annual Wine Fundraiser** is open and will run for **three weeks, closing on August 23rd**. Ordering is easy via this Eventbrite link: <https://www.eventbrite.com/e/sdfs-wine-fundraiser-2026-tickets-1993587531974?aff=oddtcreator>

This year's selection includes three excellent South Australian wines:

- **Pikes Cleanskin Riesling** **\$130/dozen; \$75/half dozen**
- **Kirrihill Cabernet Sauvignon, 2022** **\$160/dozen; \$85/half dozen**
- **Kirrihill Shiraz, 2022** **\$160/dozen; \$85/half dozen**

Both the Kirrihill 2022 Partner Series Cabernet Sauvignon and Shiraz retail for \$30 per bottle so are great value at \$160 per dozen.

Wines are available in **dozen and half-dozen cases**, making it the perfect opportunity to stock up for yourself or share with family and friends.

As per our liquor licence requirements, wine collection and payment is on Saturday, 29 August only.

Every purchase helps support the Federation's ongoing running costs and strengthens our advocacy work on behalf of the diving community.

Don't miss out—place your order before sales close and enjoy some fantastic wines while supporting a great cause. Thank you for your continued support, and cheers!

Important Notices

- Edithburgh jetty now closed for repairs until mid 2027.
- Piccaninnie Ponds continues to be closed to the public for water-based activities until further notice.

SDFSA Committee Business

At the 2025-26 AGM, the following were elected to the SDFSA Committee for 2026-27.

Executive		Committee Members
President: Vice-President: Secretary: Treasurer:	Helena Wescombe-Down Rob Blackburn Sue Booth Farzad Atefi	Jenny Berry Anthony Brady Angela Cogman Heather Creech Lukasz Halbryt Sara Leggatt Tony Leggatt Heather Petty

We would like to thank two former members of the Committee who stepped down this year: Amanda Biddle and JP Davies-Morgante. Your contributions were much appreciated.

We would also like to thank Tony Leggatt for the years that he served as President and Vice President of the Federation, but look forward to his support as a general committee member.

The next meeting of the Committee is Wednesday, 26 August, 7pm at the Arab Steed upstairs meeting room.

Congratulations and Thanks to...

- Maritime Constructions who donated the 40m-long grab hopper dredger the MV Andrew Wilson for scuttling as a dive wreck 6km off Brighton. Workers have been busy preparing the vessel in the North Arm of the Port River for scuttling in Gulf St Vincent.
- Mark Tozer for having hosted many dive club events at the Rodney Fox & Mark Tozer's Learning Centre recently.
- Dr Dominic McAfee (University of Adelaide) received the AMSA Emerging Leader in Marine Science Award for his leadership in marine restoration research, while Antonia Cooper (University of Tasmania) was presented with the AMSA Technical Award, recognising two decades of excellence in marine ecosystem monitoring, scientific diving and research operations.

News from Shops and Clubs

EyreLab: Check out the great article in InDaily for an update on the terrific work Manny Katz and team are doing to restore South Australia's marine ecosystems by building native oyster reefs across the state, with the aim of reducing the impact of future algal blooms.

<https://www.indailysa.com.au/news/just-in/2026/07/30/stopping-the-next-algal-bloom-one-mans-fight-to-return-vital-sa-habitat>

BSAC: Come try a dive with BSAC Adelaide! We're such a friendly, welcoming group – come along and dive with us, bring your mates too!

Whether you're returning after a break or just want to brush up your skills, join our Scuba Refresher Sessions:

 Dates: Sundays 11 Oct, 18 Oct, 25 Oct

 Time: 9:30am – 11:30am

 Where: SA Aquatic & Leisure Centre, Oaklands Park

Perfect for getting back underwater with confidence, or just having a go in a safe, fun pool environment. Small groups, experienced instructors, and lots of encouragement!

Book now at www.bsacadelaide.com or email mail@bsacadelaide.com

Adelaide University Scuba Club: Rodney Fox Museum Night - Friday 11/9/26. Our night at the Rodney Fox and Mark Tozer Museum and Research Centre is confirmed for the 11th of September! The doors will open at 5:30pm for drinks and mingle, with a 45 minute presentation given around 7:00pm before returning to the socialising. \$20 per person, paid on the night. No RSVP required, lets get as many people out as possible! New members and divers are highly encouraged to join! It will

be a great opportunity to meet all the faces around the club, and to learn more about the SCUBA diving history of South Australia. See you there!

Marine Life Society of SA: Johanna Williams from iNaturalist will be the guest speaker at MLSSA's next meeting being held at the Port Environment Centre, 27 North Parade, Port Adelaide at 7pm on Wednesday 19th August. She will speak about her work with the algal bloom through iNaturalist, some of which has involved lots of counts of organisms and species. She is also doing *Karenia* ID's using microscopes, etc.. Visitors are welcome to attend.

Dr. Richard Harris and Aurora Expeditions: Aurora Expeditions has announced that Dr Richard Harris OAM will join Aurora Expeditions' Antarctic voyages as a Special Guest. Dr Harris will travel on the *Across the Antarctic Circle*, departing 28 February 2027, and *Antarctica Complete*, departing 1 February 2028. He will be sharing firsthand insights from more than 30 years of cave-diving, technical diving, exploration and rescue experience through Aurora Expeditions' onboard enrichment program. Contact Yvonne Cadd, Mobile Travel & Cruise Advisor, for details at ycadd@mtatravel.com.au.

Go Diving Show in Sydney: This year's Go Diving Show in Sydney promises to be full of exciting presentations including the true story behind the Hollywood film *Last Breath: Stranded on the seabed* with almost no breathing gas. Against all odds, Chris Lemons survived. Hear the incredible true story live at the Go Diving Show.

Join Chris for an unforgettable presentation, audience Q&A, and the chance to meet him in person.

Discover the latest dive equipment, dream dive destinations, training agencies and much more from over 100 exhibitors.



Sydney Showground



14 5–6 September



Book your tickets today.

Local Diving History

By Steve Reynolds, SDFSA member 0001 and Inaugural Life Member

DAVE BURCHELL

As I recently reposted on Facebook, "Dave Burchell was the Society for Underwater Historical Research (SUHR, now SA Archaeology Society) Patron from 1975 to 1990, at least. That's some 15 years. According to Wikipedia, "David Godwin Burchell, Born 23 September 1924 Died 20 September 2009 (aged 84)" and "In 1967, Burchell led an expedition to locate and successfully find the wrecks of HMAS Perth and USS Houston, both sunk at the Battle of Sunda Strait during World War II. The bell from HMAS Perth, which was the object of David's search, is now in the collection of the Australian War Memorial. In 1973, Burchell was one of six members of the South Australian Government's inquiry into scuba diving deaths in freshwater sinkholes and underwater caves in the Southeast of South Australia. The Report of the Committee "appointed to investigate safety precautions for Scuba Divers in Freshwater Sinkholes and Underwater Caves" which was presented to the Government in January 1974 essentially recommended non-legislative response to the problem. The subsequent voluntary program of regulation via diver training and certification has been carried out by the Cave Divers Association of Australia. The success of the program is evident with the low fatality rate in cave diving since the implementation of the Report's recommendations.

Burchell was a member and the patron of both the Underwater Explorers Club of South Australia and the Society for Underwater Historical Research. In 1968, Burchell received a British Empire Medal (Civil Division) in 'recognition of service to diving and collection of war relics.'

Eric Kotz commented on my re-post, "Dave Burchell was a childhood hero of mine and a legend while in the Tumby Bay area where his wife Ona came from. I have used some of his original Scuba gear, which must have been some of the State's earliest, and still have it. It was very basic and primitive by today's standard . The backpack of chromed pipe is a classic and had lead balls inside it for neutral buoyancy for dives at different depths . The whole system could be dumped by pulling on a string attached to a split pin. It was surprisingly comfortable to wear, and the cylinder was attached by a single cable with a bronze thumbscrew."

FOR YOUR CALENDAR: FORTHCOMING EVENTS

South Australia

7th-9th August: **Science Alive!** at the Adelaide Showgrounds. Friday is STEM careers day; Saturday-Sunday is open to the public.

Friday 14 August, 6:30 pm: **Splash Inn with Josh Richards on the Laos Cave rescue.** Free: Registration on Eventbrite at <https://www.eventbrite.com/e/splash-inn-009-inside-the-laos-cave-rescue-with-josh-richards-tickets-1993453268388>

Friday 11 September, 5:30 pm onwards. **Adelaide University Scuba Club:** Rodney Fox Museum Night. \$20 at the door, no RSVP needed.

24th September 10am - 2pm: **U3A South Coast** event on Marine life of the Great Southern Reef at the Church of Christ Hall in Seaview Rd at Victor Harbor. There will be a focus on seadragons and sustainable fishery management, with a case study on either the snapper or the tuna fishery in SA. Rubab Nazar is presenting re. seadragons on behalf of MLSSA.

September 25th - October 11 th : **The Nature Festival** <https://www.naturefestival.org.au> This year's theme is Seed. The Nature Festival is a collaborative movement of more than 200 community groups and organisations. We exist to celebrate our unique love for nature in South Australia.

Friday 16 October. Splash Inn with Sea Dragon films. Rob Roy Hotel. Free: Registration on Eventbrite coming in September.

19 – 22 October 2026: **The Society for Ecological Restoration Australasia's** SERA 2026 Conference: Hilton Hotel, Adelaide

Interstate/International

15th–23rd August: **National Science Week** (Australia's annual celebration of science, technology, engineering, and maths (STEM).)

30 Aug to 3 Sept. **Australian Marine Sciences Association.** Canberra, ACT. More info_at: <https://imos.us7.list-manage.com/track/click?u=678abf6ed7521f3a275e703d1&id=12ea1c5560&e=92ec67c6ac>

5-6th September: **Go Diving Show in Sydney.** <http://www.godivingshow.com/anz>

19th-23rd October: The **Australasian Coastal Restoration Network's** ACRN 2026 Symposium: Thursday 22 October - Friday 23 October | Venue TBC.

ABOUT THE SDFSFA...

The Scuba Divers Federation of South Australia is a non-profit, incorporated membership association dedicated to the preservation and enjoyment of our unique underwater world. You can join us for free: <https://sdfsfa.net/membership-categories/>.

SCUBA DIVERS FEDERATION OF SA Inc.

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