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Australian Institute of Maritime Archaeology:  
Eleventh Annual Conference,  
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Patrick J. O’Keefe\*

Three sessions of this conference were devoted to the subject “Protecting the Underwater Cultural Heritage”. Dr Patrick O’Keefe spoke on the European Convention on the Protection of the Archaeological Heritage which extends to elements of the archaeological heritage within the jurisdiction of States that become party. Dr Henry Cleere discussed the topic “Underwater Heritage and the World Heritage Convention”. There are no underwater sites on the World Heritage List. Although they are not excluded from being nominated for inclusion, two requirements of the Convention militate against their so being: first, the site would have to be one of outstanding universal value; secondly, it would have to be situated on the territory of a State Party.

On a national level, legislation is very important to establish what may or may not be done with wrecks. In this, Denmark has developed an advanced system. Dr Carsten Lund described the administration of the Danish legislation which applies up to 24 nautical miles from the baselines from which the territorial waters are measured. Danish practice is to permit excavation only when the heritage is threatened by destruction either naturally or by very important public works or if there are very good scientific reasons for it. Planners can access the records of sites and the administration conducts surveys to prevent damage by construction projects. Close relations are maintained with sportsdivers, many of whom take part in registration work and monitor protected areas.

Other papers were devoted to aspects of the underwater cultural heritage in Australia and New Zealand. Robert McKinnon from the South Australian Department of Environment and Planning spoke on the possibility of using marine parks to provide varying types of protection for wrecks which are themselves protected by the Historic Shipwrecks Act 1976. Dr Alan Roberts from the Federal Department of the Arts, Sport, the Environment and Territories, outlined changes in the administration of the Federal legislation, including the declaration of blanket protection on 1 February 1993, which would provide legal protection to about 5,000 wrecks in Australian waters and an amnesty to those who had not reported the discovery of a wreck or

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their possession of shipwreck relics. New Zealand is implementing changes in its administration of the protective regime applying to shipwrecks. Of interest, and similar to the South Australian situation mentioned above, it will be possible to create marine reserves. It will be illegal to tamper with or disturb the marine environment within a reserve. Consequently, wreck sites within the reserve will be protected.