

**Penny Sharpe**

Minister for Climate Change, Minister for Energy  
Minister for the Environment, Minister for Heritage  
Leader of the Government in the Legislative Council

**Media Release****SS NEMESIS: Call to find descendants of shipwreck victims is answered**

Friday, 8 March 2024

**Photos of ship Captain and relative, underwater vision and more:** <https://bit.ly/3v0X66F>

Twenty relatives of crew members who died at sea 120 years ago have come forward to share their family stories, after the wreck of SS *Nemesis* was found off Port Kembla on the NSW coast.

Minister for Heritage Penny Sharpe issued a global call almost two weeks ago, asking for descendants of the 32 people on board the ship when it vanished in 1904 to reach out to Heritage NSW. Crew members were from Australia, the United Kingdom and Canada. Between them, they left behind more than 40 children.

So far, 20 grandchildren and great grandchildren have come forward from NSW, Queensland, Victoria, South Australia and Western Australia, to seek and share information about their family history. They include relatives of Captain Alexander Lusher.

Heritage NSW is asking relatives to write down their stories so they can be collated and archived. Until now, these stories were hidden from this chapter in the maritime history of NSW. They are providing a better understanding and appreciation of the plight of SS *Nemesis* as well as previous unknown details of shipping, trade and craftsmanship from the early 1900s.

The discovery and recent identification of the wreck solved a mystery spanning more than a century.

SS *Nemesis* departed Newcastle in July 1904, loaded with coal and headed for Melbourne. It was last sighted signalling distress in a storm off Wollongong. The bodies of at least four crew members washed ashore at Cronulla Beach in the days after, and the men were buried in Sutherland.

In 2022, remote sensing company Subsea Professional Marine Services discovered the vessel in deep, high-current water, and this year experts from Heritage NSW and CSIRO have been able to match the wreck's distinctive features with historical photographs and sketches of SS *Nemesis*.

Those with a connection to SS *Nemesis* are asked to contact Heritage NSW:

<https://www.environment.nsw.gov.au/topics/heritage> or [heritagemailbox@environment.nsw.gov.au](mailto:heritagemailbox@environment.nsw.gov.au).

**Quote attributable to Minister for Heritage Penny Sharpe:**

“This discovery is already bringing closure to families tied to this maritime tragedy, and I hope more and more people will come forward, from Australia and possibly even the UK and Canada.

“NSW now has a better understanding of its heritage, thanks to this huge collaborative effort to discover what happened to SS *Nemesis* and her brave crew in stormy waters back in 1904.”

**Quote attributable to Denise Burrell, Great Granddaughter of Captain Alexander Lusher:**

“My family members are descendants of Alexander Lusher, Captain of SS *Nemesis* at the time it was wrecked.

“My mother, who is 99 years old, is Captain Lusher's granddaughter and now his oldest surviving relative.

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“After hearing the wreck had been found, Mum re-told our family the story of SS *Nemesis* from what she remembers.

“Throughout my life I have heard the ‘family folklore’, but this research and discovery has made it so much more real.

“The partnership between Heritage NSW, CSIRO and Subsea Professional Marine Services has provided us with so much information to fill the gaps in our knowledge. Thanks sincerely for this.”

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