

\$1.3m to find lost WWII cruiser

Ria Pandey

The search for an Australian warship lost at sea during a battle in World War II received more than \$1m in funding from the federal government, newly released documents show.

Australian navy light cruiser HMAS Sydney sunk off the West Australian coast in November 1941 after a battle with German raider Kormoran.

The foreign warship had been disguised as a Dutch merchant ship before opening fire on the Australian vessel, which later burst into flames, according to existing naval records.

Of the more than 600 people on board, none survived.

On August 1, 2005, the then minister for justice and customs Chris Ellison wrote to then prime minister John Howard about a proposal from charity HMAS Sydney Search to conduct a search for the lost warship, according to cabinet documents released by the National Archives of Australia.

The organisation proposed it conduct the hunt for the wreckage in two phases: the first, a sonar search, and the second, a visual investigation involving remotely operated vehicles.

Seven days later, the letter was raised in a cabinet meeting and a "strictly limited" funding commitment of \$1.3m was agreed upon to bankroll the first phase of the search, according to cabinet documents.

The cabinet also flagged notable factors, including the "importance of undertaking the search in the 60th anniversary year of the end of WWII" and the "tax deductibility status of the search company".

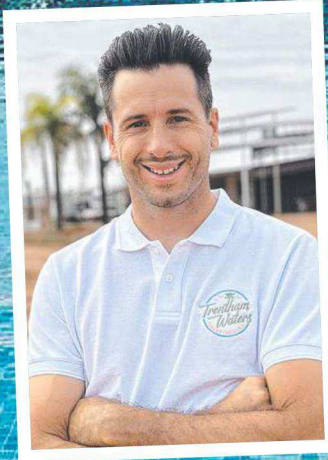
According to media reports, the government had been asked several times to offer more than \$1.3m by HMAS Sydney Search.

A request in 2006 was denied after the government chose to hold to its \$1.3m commitment.

Two years later, the wreckage was found by the Finding Sydney Foundation off the coast of WA.

Plunge into paradise

V8 champ puts Mildura on the fast track to luxury



Trentham Waters Resort, which opened last month, and (inset left) V8 Supercars champ Rick Kelly.

Stuart Kavanagh

Step aside Palm Springs and make room for Mildura, the home of Victoria's hottest new luxury resort kitted out with lagoon pools, villas and a waterslide – courtesy of a V8 Supercars champion.

Mildura-born Supercars champ Rick Kelly has launched Trentham Waters Resort, a luxury resort in the Sunraysia region that he hopes will boost tourism to his home town with the ultimate cocktail-by-the-pool holiday experience.

"I was travelling all around the world back when I was rac-

ing cars, I mean I went everywhere and I love no place more than I love Mildura and that's why we built this place to try and attract people to this incredible region," he said.

The resort includes restaurants, a splash park, tennis and basketball courts and dozens of villas, cabins and ensuite sites.

A boat ramp and a jetty are also on site, with family features like putt-putt golf and playgrounds in the works.

Kelly launched a 10-week "test flight to paradise" trial in December for a lucky cohort of visitors, with the intention of opening fully early in 2026.

"It's obviously quite a large resort and we didn't want to just kick the gates open and welcome thousands of guests when we weren't absolutely sure we had refined the processes and everything to run a resort this size," he said.

Kelly said the resort would cater to all needs – from couples to caravanners.

"Generally, the most popular market coming in is younger families, because there's so much for the kids to do with the water park and everything else," he said.

"Most of the sites we've put in – about 90 per cent – are drive-through sites, so you

don't need to disconnect if you don't want to."

He said the plan was to run 56 villas, 15 river retreats and about 100 cabin and caravan sites in 2026.

Kelly also aimed to pair the resort facilities with Murray River recreation, including boating and watersports.

"If you come here with your boat, from the second you drive through the gate, you shouldn't need to leave," he said.

The resort will employ nearly 100 members of staff, of whom about 80 per cent would be local.

But it won't just be the eye of

holidayers Mr Kelly hopes to attract, opening his doors for permanent residents who will be able to call a new "lifestyle village" home.

The lifestyle village promises no land tax and no council rates in a private land-lease community.

"We have lifestyle home opportunities. We will probably deliver about 15 homes in 2026 at the lifestyle village," he said.

"There is so much more to come in 2026."

Kelly famously won the 2006 Australian V8 Supercar Championship Series, edging fellow Aussie legend Craig Lowndes to take home the series.

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