Australian Government
Department of Defence

AUSTRALIAN HYDROGRAPHIC OFFICE

Fact Sheet: Paper Nautical Charts

Understanding Paper Nautical Chart symbology

At first glance, a chart looks simple to interpret. However, what exactly do all those different symbols mean? Before your next day on the water, have a look at the symbols taken from a few Australian Paper Nautical Charts.

On this page, you may be able to notice how, on the left, the depth contours are dashed and the depth values (soundings) are written in upright text. This means they are from older or incomplete surveys.

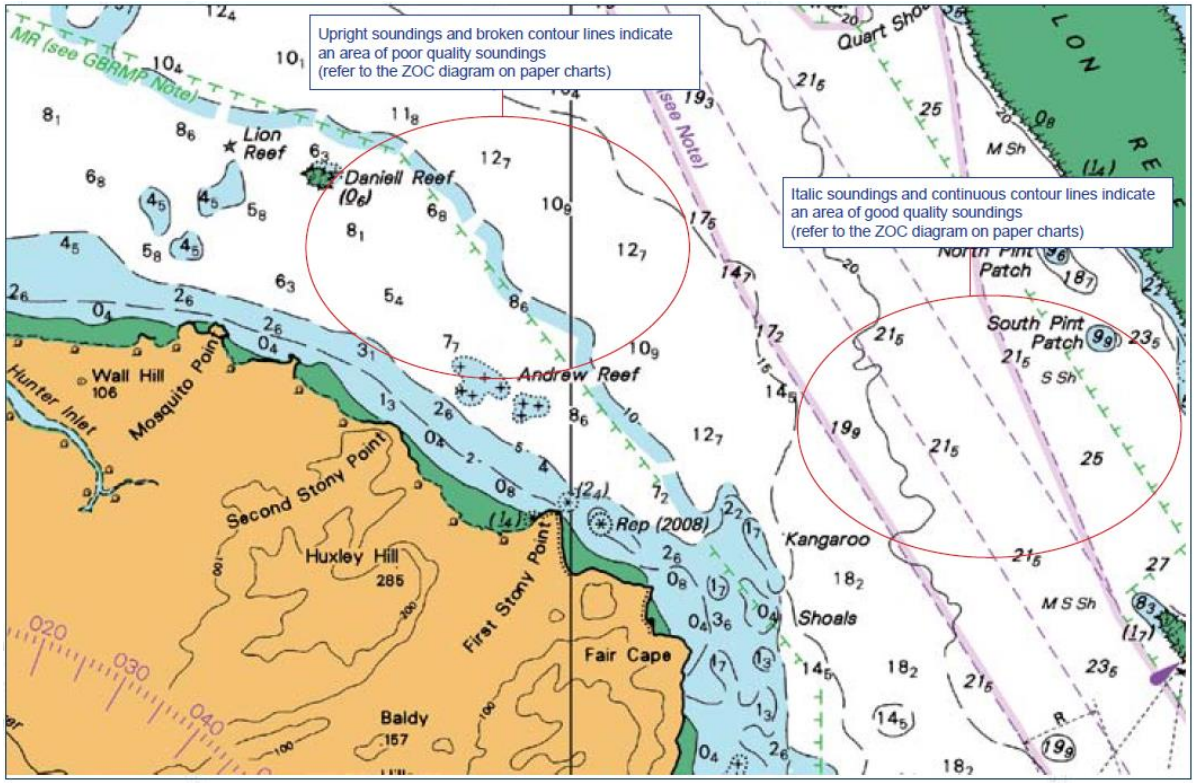
In contrast, in the shipping route on the right, the depth contours are unbroken and the soundings are written in sloped italic text. This means they are from modern and more reliable surveys. More information can be found in the Fact Sheet – Accuracy and reliability of Paper Nautical Charts.

For information regarding the accuracy and reliability of Electronic Navigation Charts, refer to AHP20 'Mariners Handbook for Australian Waters:

Both AHP20, and the separate chapter 'supplement' on accuracy and reliability of ENC, can be downloaded from the AHO website:

www.hydro.gov.au/prodserv/publications/ahp20.htm

On the next two pages, a wide variety of paper chart symbols, plus simple explanations for each, should help next time you venture into unfamiliar areas.



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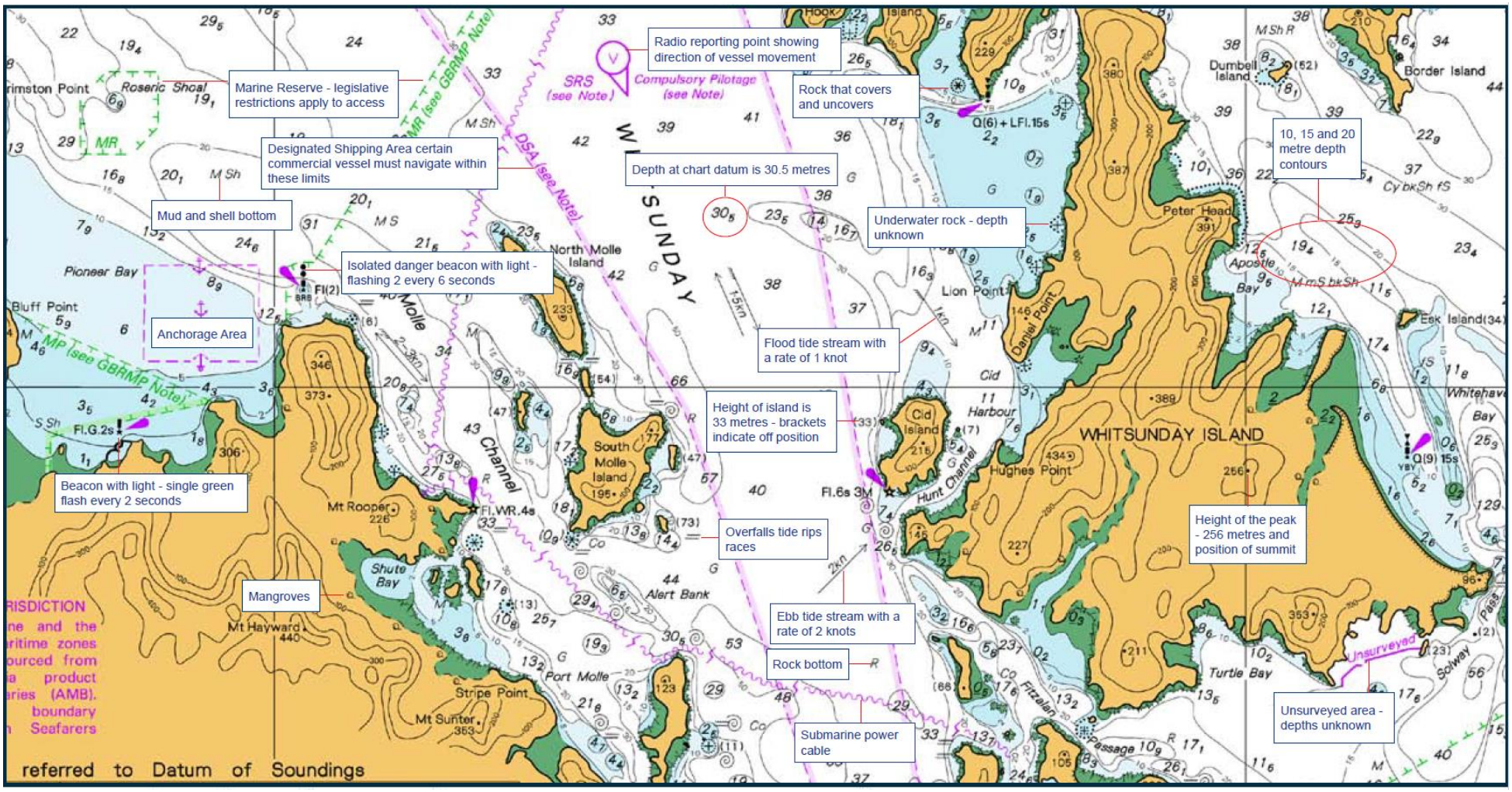

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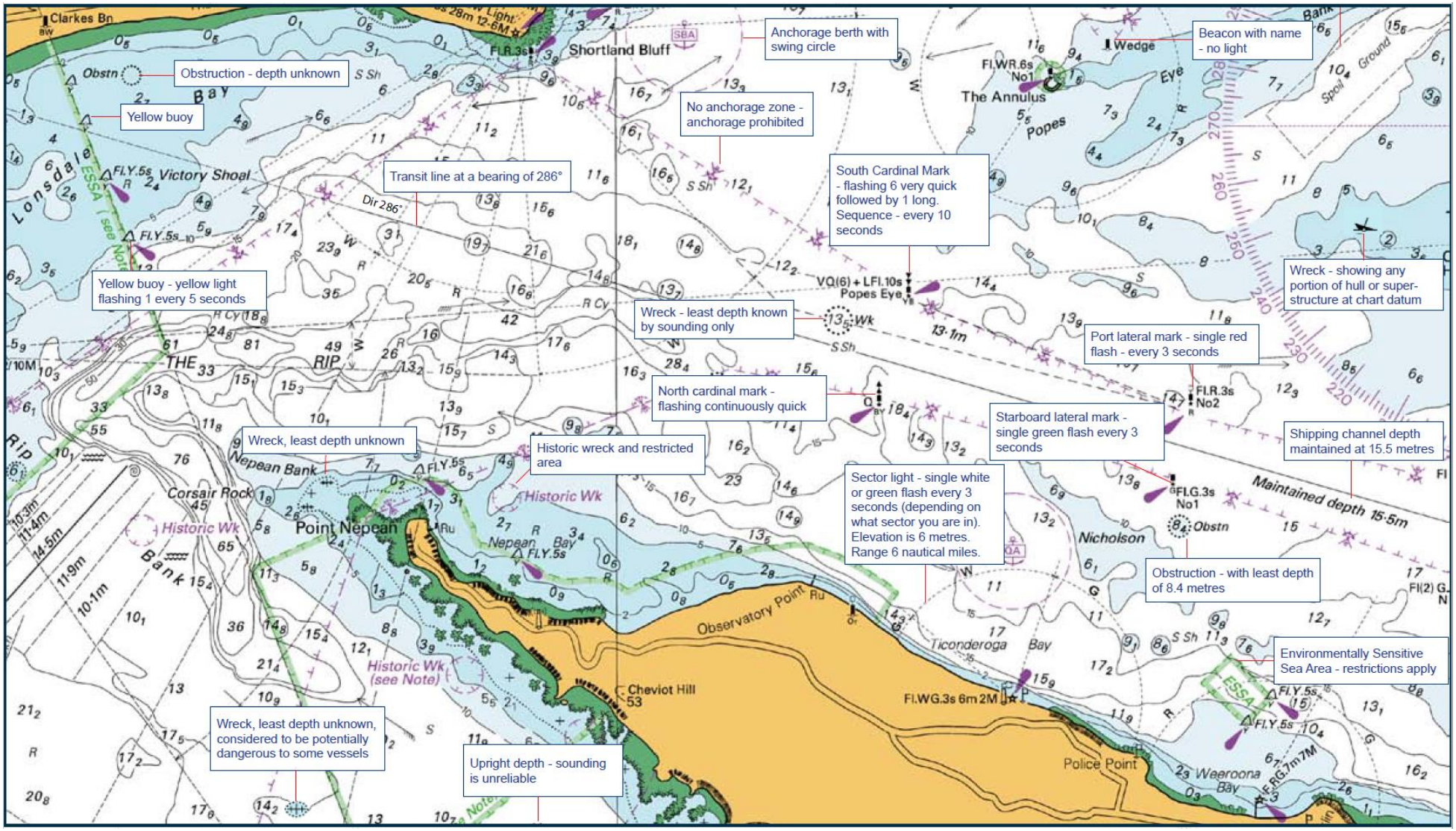

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