On 1 July this year 100 years ago, the Commonwealth of Australia officially accepted responsibility from the state and territory governments for all lighthouses around Australia.

The Australian Maritime Safety Authority (AMSA) is now responsible for maintaining aids to navigation at some 388 sites around the 37,600 kilometres of Australia’s coastline. AMSA Chief Executive Officer, Mick Kinley, said lighthouses are just as important to Australia’s maritime industry as they were 100 years ago.

Kinley commented: ‘As we move into the digital age we often get asked why we still need lighthouses? Lights have come a long way since the simple iron basket on a tripod at the heads of Sydney harbour that was erected in 1794. Apart from a light having its own self-contained power source, our modern towers now carry radar transponders, Automatic Identification Systems to locate ships and VHF radio. Our network is so much more than lights now but the lights will continue to shine as beacons for seafarers.’

To mark its special day, AMSA developed an interactive Lighthouse page on its website (see http://www.amsa.gov.au/navigation/services/aton/lighthouses/ ), which lists all Australian heritage lighthouses under their management. Kinley added: ‘Everyone loves a lighthouse; lighthouses and the people and places that go with them are fascinating. They evoke all kinds of emotion and have been the symbol of safe passage for seafarers for literally thousands of years.’

In addition to the new webpage, AMSA has a range of activities planned to mark the occasion, including:

- A partnership with Australia Post for a commemorative stamp series.
- A partnership with the Royal Australian Mint non-circulation $1 and proof $5 coins for purchase.
- Lighthouse open days throughout the year.