



THE BOSUN'S CALL

NEWSLETTER OF THE NAVAL ASSOCIATION OF AUSTRALIA



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ONCE NAVY, ALWAYS NAVY



From CN to CDF - Vice Admiral Mark Hammond this month was promoted to Admiral Hammond and took up his new role as Chief of the Defence Force.

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The official Chief of the Defence Force (CDF) handover ceremony took place on July 9, marking the transition of command from outgoing CDF Admiral David Johnston to incoming CDF Vice Admiral Mark Hammond. The official ceremony and change of guard was held in Canberra, centered at the Russell Offices or Defence Headquarters. The handover ceremony for the new CN, Vice Admiral Matthew Buckley was held on July 7, and the NAA was represented at the ceremony by David Manolas (NAA ACT Section President) and Gordon Fuller (NAA National President).



2026 Service of Thanksgiving

Naval Association of Australia (NSW Section)

The NAA NSW Section's annual Service of Thanksgiving will be held in the Garden Island Naval Chapel on Sunday 18 October 2026, commencing at 1000. The service will be followed by morning tea in the RAN Heritage Centre. All members of the Naval Association's NSW Sub-Sections, and their partners, are welcome to attend.

The memorial service will include a formal dedication of plaques by the Navy Chaplain conducting the service. The memorial plaques are those donated during the past year by families and friends of Navy veterans who have 'crossed the bar', and they are mounted within the Navy Chapel.

Service Details:

Event: Annual Service of Thanksgiving & Memorial.

Location: Garden Island Dockyard (the main gate is at the corner of Cowper Wharf Road and Macleay Street Woolloomooloo).

Ceremony: The service typically involves a scripture reading, prayers, hymns and the dedication of memorial plaques. It is supported by the Royal Australian Navy Band and a contingent of Australian Navy Cadets. The Governor of NSW, Commander Australian Fleet and other senior RAN officers have been invited to attend the 2026 service.

For further information, or to nominate to attend this event, please contact the Naval Association's NSW Secretary - call 0439 784 088, or email nswsecretary@navalassoc.org.au



CONFIRM YOUR POSTAL ADDRESS TO MAKE SURE YOUR VETERAN CARD ARRIVES WITHOUT DELAY.

19 June 2026

We'll be re-issuing Veteran Cards from July as part of a scheduled global re-issue carried out every 6 years. The Veteran Card has a new look, but the way the card works remains entirely the same. Entitlements, eligibility, and access to concessions remain unchanged.

What you need to do

To avoid any delays, ensure your postal details are up to date. The easiest way to do this is through MyService, DVA's secure online client portal.

Follow these steps to update your details in MyService:

- ☞ sign in via myGov
- ☞ select MyService from your linked services
- ☞ from the MyService home page, open the section showing your personal information
- ☞ follow the prompts to update any details that have changed, including your postal address, contact details, correspondence preferences, or other personal information relevant to your DVA services or payments
- ☞ review the information you've entered and submit your changes - this will notify DVA of the change and update your information in MyService.

What you need to know

Some Veteran Card holders may not receive their new card until around October because of the scale of the re-issue.

If your new card arrives after your current card's expiry date, you can keep using your current card until the replacement arrives.

To assist with identifying specialty cohorts and validating concession eligibility, a version of the Veteran Card - All Conditions (known as a Gold Card) specific to Totally & Permanently Incapacitated (TPI) eligible members will remain. The stamping of speciality cohorts such as War Widow/er, Dependant, and Extreme Disablement Adjustment (EDA) will also remain.

Digital Veteran Card option

If you've ditched the wallet and prefer digital cards, you can download the digital Veteran Card to your myGov app wallet. The digital Veteran Card works the same way as the physical card and provides the same information.

More information about DVA Veteran Cards is available on the DVA website.

New look

Here is how the new Veterans Cards will look:



THIS DAY IN HISTORY

OPERATION WATCHTOWER
2 JULY 1942

Steel and Southern Cross: Australian Cruisers at Operation Watchtower



The Allied Fleet Musters, August 1942

In the first week of August 1942, the waters north of the New Hebrides hummed with an armada the Pacific had not yet seen. Assembled under Vice Admiral Frank Jack Fletcher, the Allied naval force tasked with seizing Guadalcanal and Tulagi numbered more than eighty ships – carriers, battleships, transports, and destroyers drawn from the United States Navy and the Royal Australian Navy. Among them, three Australian heavy cruisers steamed in company: HMAS *Australia*, HMAS *Canberra*, and HMAS *Hobart*. It was the largest amphibious operation the Allies had yet attempted in the Pacific, and Australia's navy was squarely at its centre.

Operation Watchtower – derided by American planners as "Operation Shoestring" for its improvised, under-resourced nature – aimed to deny Japan a strategic airfield nearing completion on Guadalcanal. The stakes could hardly have been higher. A Japanese air base in the southern Solomons would threaten the sea lanes between the United States and Australia, potentially strangling the Allied position in the South Pacific entirely.

The Ships and Their Captains

HMAS *Australia* (Captain H. B. Farncomb) was the flagship of Rear Admiral Victor Crutchley, RN, who commanded the screening cruisers under the Allied designation Task Force 44. A County-class heavy cruiser displacing nearly 10,000 tons, *Australia* carried eight eight-inch guns and had already seen action against German raiders in the Atlantic. She was the most powerful vessel in the Australian contingent and lent the task force both firepower and prestige.

HMAS *Canberra* (Captain Frank Getting), sister ship to *Australia*, was assigned to the Southern Screening Group guarding the approaches between Guadalcanal and Florida Island – the waters that would become infamous as Ironbottom Sound. Commissioned in 1928, she had served in the Atlantic and Indian Oceans before returning to the Pacific theatre. Her crew of nearly 800 men were seasoned and confident.

HMAS *Hobart* (Captain H. L. Howden) was a lighter vessel – a modified Leander-class light cruiser – assigned to the Northern Force screening the transports off Tulagi. With six six-inch guns and a turn of speed exceeding 32 knots, she was better suited to patrol and escort than to fleet engagement, but her presence added depth to the Allied screen.

The Landing and Its Aftermath

On the morning of 7 August 1942, the Marines went ashore. The landings on Guadalcanal met little resistance; the airfield was taken by nightfall. Tulagi and its adjacent islands were harder fought, but by 8 August the beachhead was secured. The Australian cruisers patrolled offshore, suppressing shore positions and guarding the transports.

Then came the night of 8–9 August. While Admiral Crutchley had been summoned to a conference aboard the transport *McCawley*, a Japanese cruiser force under Rear Admiral Gunichi Mikawa slipped down "The Slot" – the channel between the Solomon Islands – in total darkness. In less than an hour, the Battle of Savo Island became one of the most catastrophic Allied naval defeats of the war. Four Allied heavy cruisers were sunk. One of them was HMAS *Canberra*, struck by gunfire and torpedoes and so badly damaged that she had to be scuttled at dawn to prevent capture. Captain Getting, mortally wounded on his bridge, died shortly after. Eighty-four of his crew perished with the ship.

Australia was absent from the slaughter – she had accompanied Crutchley to the conference. *Hobart*, stationed in the northern group, was not engaged. Their survival was an accident of circumstance rather than judgment, and the grief of losing *Canberra* fell heavily on the entire RAN.

Legacy

Despite the catastrophe at Savo Island, the landings held. Guadalcanal was not abandoned, and the campaign that followed consumed Japanese naval and air power in a six-month attritional struggle that ultimately broke the momentum of Japan's Pacific advance. The three Australian cruisers had played an integral role in making the initial lodgement possible.

HMAS *Canberra* was lost, but she was not forgotten. In a gesture of enduring alliance, the United States Navy named one of its own Baltimore-class heavy cruisers *USS Canberra* in her honour – the only time in American history a warship has been named for a foreign capital city. It was a tribute to the crew who had sailed from Australian waters to fight in an Allied cause and who had paid the ultimate price on a dark sea far from home.

HANDING OVER THE WEIGHT OF COMMAND

Navy News - 2 July 2026



Rear Admiral Terry Morrison greets Commanding Officer HMAS Sydney (V) Commander Ben Weller CSC, onboard in Hawaii, United States.
Photo Credit: LSIS Lauren Pugsley

Commanding Officer HMAS Sydney Commander Ben Weller handed over the weight of command to Commander Hayden Jenkins on June 25, after the ship arrived in Pearl Harbor, Hawaii, for Exercise Rim of the Pacific (RIMPAC).

Commander Weller said it had been an honour and a privilege to command Sydney as he thanked the ship's company for their efforts during his tenure.

Commander Jenkins outlined his appreciation for the leadership and commitment of his predecessor. He further recognised the ongoing efforts of Sydney's officers and sailors as they prepared to conduct the sea phase of RIMPAC, the world's largest international maritime exercise.



(R-L) Outgoing HMAS Sydney (V) Commanding Officer Commander Ben Weller CSC RAN, 'Hands the Weight' to incoming Commanding Officer Commander Hayden Jenkins RAN onboard HMAS Sydney (V) in Hawaii, United States. Photo: LSIS Lauren Pugsley

"RIMPAC provides an excellent training environment for Sydney to integrate with our regional allies and partners, while enhancing our maritime warfighting capabilities," Commander Jenkins said.

"The sheer scale of RIMPAC permits a level of training complexity that is unsurpassed, bringing together a large number of participants to exercise high-end warfighting skills aligned with the RIMPAC theme of 'Partners, Integrated and Prepared'."

During RIMPAC, Sydney will highlight the ship's capabilities, building on her success from the previous iteration of the exercise in 2024.

Beyond the at-sea exercises, Sydney's officers and sailors will conduct professional exchanges and build person-to-person relationships with partner nations.

Australia is one of 31 nations participating in RIMPAC, which includes about 30 surface ships, five submarines, more than 206 aircraft and more than 25,000 personnel.

BREAKING NEWS



It has just been learned that the Military Shop - located in Fyshwick - has closed their showroom. From 29 June all sales will be through their online store at navyshop.com.au or militaryshop.com.au

More information can be found at navyshop.com.au/the-next-chapter





Veterans can earn more before pensions affected

25 June 2026

From 1 July 2026, veterans can earn more, and the value of their assets can be higher, before their pension payments are affected.

The rise in income and asset amounts is in line with the annual indexation process of the income free areas and asset value limits that are used to calculate rates of income support pensions. Disability compensation payments and war widow(er)'s pensions are not subject to the income and assets tests.

Related to these thresholds increasing, some recipients of the service pension, income support supplement, veteran payment and social security age pension may see an increase to their payments.

The rate of permanent impairment payments, eligible young person payments, as well as limits for household services and attendant care under the Military Rehabilitation and Compensation Act 2004 (MRCA) will increase from 1 July 2026.

Veterans who are receiving compensation payments under the Safety, Rehabilitation and Compensation (Defence-related Claims) Act 1988 (DRCA) will also receive an increase. Pensioners don't need to do anything to receive the increase.

The Veterans' Entitlements Act 1986 (VEA) and DRCA will close to new claims for rehabilitation and compensation on 1 July 2026. Payments received under these Acts will continue to be indexed. This includes the rates applicable to claims lodged prior to 1 July 2026, ensuring the clients who have lodged these claims are not disadvantaged when their claims are determined.

The table below outlines the new limits and thresholds for income support payments and new MRCA and DRCA rates. For more information, including a summary of the new income and asset thresholds, pension rates and allowances please visit the DVA payment rates page.

New maximum limits and thresholds from 1 July 2026

Amount of income a recipient may receive before their pension is reduced	Single rate (fortnightly)	Couples rate - combined (fortnightly)
Service or Age Pension	\$ 226.00	\$ 396.00
Income Support Supplement (War Widow[er]'s Pension is included in these amounts)*	\$ 1,872.00	\$ 2,519.20
Maximum value of assets a person can have before their pension is affected		
Service or Age Pension		
Homeowner	\$ 333,000.00	\$ 499,000.00
Non-homeowner	\$ 600,000.00	\$ 766,000.00
Income Support Supplement*		
Homeowner	\$ 607,500.00	\$ 853,000.00
Non-homeowner	\$ 874,500.00	\$ 1,120,000.00
Deeming threshold	\$ 66,800.00	\$ 110,600.00

MRCA rates	New Rate (Weekly)
Maximum Permanent Impairment amount	\$ 447.39
Maximum rate of Household Services	\$ 633.47
Maximum rate of Attendant Care	\$ 633.47
Dependent eligible young person	\$ 191.56

DRCA rates	New Rate (Lump Sum)
Maximum lump sum permanent impairment	\$ 323,722.77
New Rate (Weekly)	
Maximum household services	\$ 609.74
Maximum attendant care service	\$ 609.74
Death dependent child	\$ 188.89

*Different limits apply if assessed under transitional rules.

**GARDEN ISLAND
NAVAL CHAPEL**



**MEMORIAL
PLAQUES**

Production of memorial plaques for deceased Navy veterans

The NSW Executive of the Naval Association has assumed responsibility for the production of memorial plaques to honour Navy veterans who have 'crossed the bar.' Any member of a deceased Navy veteran's family, or friends or colleagues, can have a plaque engraved with details of the veteran's service. The cost of each plaque is \$40.00.

Once plaques have been produced, they are mounted in the Chapel of Remembrance, within the Garden Island Naval Chapel; currently there are more than 900 plaques mounted in the Chapel of Remembrance. During the Naval Association's annual Service of Thanksgiving, the chaplain conducting the service dedicates those plaques that have been produced during the previous year. Family members and colleagues of the Navy Veterans whose plaques are be dedicated are invited to attend the service.

A brochure containing information of memorial plaques, and an order form template, is available to provide guidance on this program on the NAA website.

For further information on memorial plaques, please contact the Naval Association's NSW Secretary by emailing nswsecretary@navalassoc.org.au.



AUSTRALIAN DEFENCE FORCE CHANGE OF COMMAND

2026 Handover Ceremonies

TUESDAY 7 July

CHIEF OF NAVY HANDOVER



VICE ADMIRAL MARK HAMMOND AO RAN
HANDS OVER TO VICE ADMIRAL
MATTHEW BUCKLEY AM CSC RAN

CHIEF OF JOINT CAPABILITIES HANDOVER



LIEUTENANT GENERAL SUSAN COYLE AM
CSC DSM HANDS OVER TO
AIR MARSHAL GLEN BRAZ AM CSC DSM

WEDNESDAY 8 July

CHIEF OF ARMY HANDOVER



LIEUTENANT GENERAL SIMON STUART
AO DSC HANDS OVER TO LIEUTENANT
GENERAL SUSAN COYLE AM CSC DSM

THURSDAY 9 JULY

CHIEF OF DEFENCE FORCE HANDOVER



ADMIRAL DAVID JOHNSTON AC RAN
HANDS OVER TO
ADMIRAL MARK HAMMOND AO RAN

7 July 2026

By Nigel Pittaway | Adelaide

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SOUTH AUSTRALIA PIVOTAL TO SOVEREIGN SHIPBUILDING

The 2026 ADM South Australia Defence Summit, held at the Adelaide Convention Centre on 7 July, underscored the state's involvement in the creation of a sovereign naval shipbuilding and sustainment capability. In his ministerial address at the opening of the event, SA's Minister for Defence and Space Industries noted that Adelaide is currently home to the Hunter Class Frigate build program, the Hobart-class Destroyer Capability Enhancement Program, the Collins-class submarine Life of Type Extension (LOTE) program and is also the city where Australia's SSN-AUKUS submarines will be built.

The Australian Submarine Agency's (ASA) Deputy Director General for nuclear submarines, David Johnson, noted that the SSN-AUKUS capability – along with the interim Virginia-class nuclear-powered attack submarines – will form the basis of Australia's strategy of denial in future years.

"Australia must build and undersea warfare capability that is able to work at long distances and is enduring," he told delegates. "Working in partnerships is essential, it is a whole of nation effort," adding that in the meantime, the Collins LOTE program will be essential to ensuring a viable undersea capability.

Johnson noted that Australia is starting at a "zero base" on its journey towards nuclear stewardship and provided details of progress made to date, including around 500 people currently working on the design and development of a facility at Osborne, which will not only build SSN-AUKUS, but be instrumental in sustaining it through its service life.



Commodore Scott Lockey, Director General of the Hunter Class Frigate Program speaking at the 2026 ADM South Australia Defence Summit.
Credit: Nigel Pittaway

"We will need to be capable of multi-class sustainment – Collins, Virginia, and SSN-AUKUS," he told delegates. "A great deal of effort needs to go into the planning for that."

The Hobart DECP is being undertaken within BAE Systems Australia's facility at Osborne and, as the Navy's Surface Project Director Captain Dane Wilson, explained, the work is more akin to a spiral capability upgrade than a traditional Mid-Life Upgrade (MLU) activity.

The program will add new weapons capability in the shape of Tomahawk, Naval Strike Missile (NSM) and a pathway to the SM-6 missile, as well as significant upgrades to the Hobart's Aegis combat system, platform updates, comms and EW enhancements and sustainment improvements.

CAPT Wilson said that work on the first ship is progressing well and is expected to be back in the water around the end of the year, with test and evaluation activities to occur over the following 12 months.

"If we cannot defence the force, we cannot protect the force," he said when

describing the importance of the DCEP to delegates.

Commodore Scott Lockey, Director General of the Hunter Class Frigate Program provided a rare update of progress to date, beginning with an explanation of why Australia is spending so much money on the maritime domain.

"These investments support efforts to increase Australia's self-reliance and strengthen the resilience of Australia's sovereign defence industrial base," he noted. "41 per cent of our Integrated Investment Plan investment is attributed to the maritime domain (and) the IIP details that \$17 billion of expenditure has been approved for Hunter across the decade."

CDRE Lockey emphasised that investment in the Hunter-class program isn't solely about building six anti-submarine warfare frigates for the Navy, but it is also an investment in the sovereign naval shipbuilding enterprise.

In the meantime, he said that the program is on track for a keel-laying ceremony at the end of August.

"The HCF program is making great progress. The first ship is starting to take shape," he concluded. "All our major suppliers are on contract, and we are building a skilled workforce across a range of trades and engineering disciplines to generate a sovereign shipbuilding industry."

An in-depth report on the 2026 South Australia Defence Summit will appear in the September/October issue of ADM.



DVA Contact Numbers

Provider invoicing & billing enquiries: 1300 550 017

Provider enquiries: 1800 550 457

Transport bookings: 1800 550 455

Veterans' Affairs Pharmaceutical Advisory Centre (VAPAC): 1800 552 580

Hearing or speech impairment assistance

If you are deaf, or have a hearing impairment or speech impairment, contact us through the [National Relay Service](#) (NRS):

Talk To You (TTY) users phone 1800 555 677 then ask for 1800 838 372

Speak and Listen users phone 1800 555 727 then ask for 1800 838 372

Internet relay users connect to the NRS then ask for 1800 838 372

Information on health services may be obtained from DVA. The contact numbers for health care pro-viders requiring further information or prior financial authorisation for all States and Territories are listed below:

TELEPHONE: 1800 VETERAN (1800 838 372)

INTERNATIONAL CALLERS: +61 2 6289 1133

POSTAL ADDRESS FOR ALL STATES AND TERRITORIES:

Department of Veterans' Affairs

Health Approvals & Home Care Section

GPO Box 9998

BRISBANE QLD 4001

DVA WEBSITE: <http://www.dva.gov.au/providers/allied-healthprofessionals>

DVA EMAIL: For prior financial authorisation: health.approval@dva.gov.au

The appropriate prior approval request form can be found at: <https://www.dva.gov.au/providers/servicesrequiring-prior-approval>

CLAIMS FOR PAYMENT

For information about claims for payment visit: www.dva.gov.au/providers/how-claim

CLAIM ENQUIRIES: 1300 550 017 (Option 2 Allied Health)

Claims will take a variety of times to complete based on whether or not the claim is prioritised for allocation to a decision maker and the complexity of the claim itself. For example, if the service of the individual crosses two or more Acts or contains a lot of health conditions and injuries or both. This results in some claims being decided faster than the average time, while some claims take longer.

For any condition, to make the claiming process smoother, follow these 3 steps:

- Step 1: Get your medical practitioner to con-firm your diagnosis.
- Step 2: Supply the documents you need to;
- Step 3: Check if you are already eligible for free health care and treatment.

CLAIMS PROGRESS

The Department of Veterans' Affairs (DVA) continues to process outstanding claims as quickly as possible, to deliver much needed help to veterans and families sooner.

As part of our commitment to routinely, publicly, and meaningfully reporting on claims processing progress, each month DVA releases updated data via the claims processing page.

A snapshot of May 2026:

DVA received 8,979 claims in May bringing the total for the financial year to date (FYTD) to 98,799 claims – 7.3 per cent higher than the same period last year.

DVA made 7,042 determinations and has finalised 85,573 claims in the FYTD, 8.6% per cent less than the equivalent period last year. 70,344 claims were with an officer for processing, and 31,316 claims were yet to be allocated for processing.

The average time taken to process a MRCA IL claim was 361 days in the 2025-26 FYTD (1 July 2025 to 31 May 2026), compared to 311 days in the corresponding 2024-25 FYTD.

OPEN ARMS

Veterans & Families Counselling

Open Arms provides mental health and wellbeing support to anyone who has served at least one day of continuous fulltime service in the ADF and their immediate families.

1800 011 046

SAFE ZONE SUPPORT

Free and anonymous counselling line for all current and ex-serving ADF personnel, veterans and their families. Available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week

1800 142 072

DEFENCE FAMILY HELPLINE

Available 24/7 or online at www.defence.gov.au/members-families/defence-helpline.asp. Staffed by qualified human services professionals including social workers and psychologists.

1800 628 036

DEFENCE ALL HOURS SUPPORT LINE

24/7 confidential telephone service for Australian Defence Force (ADF) members and their families to facilitate access to ADF or civilian mental health services.

1800 628 036