



# National Bosun's Call



Vol 5 No 8

Once Navy, Always Navy

September 2025



*Commanding Officer HMAS Canberra, Captain David McPherson, RAN and Command Warrant Officer HMAS Canberra, Warrant Officer Kevin Harris, receiving their wreath and saluting after laying the wreath on the HMAS Canberra (I) memorial at Lake Burley Griffin in Canberra on 9 August 2025 marking the 83rd anniversary of the loss on HMAS Canberra I*

*Photos: Defence*



National Newsletter of the  
**Naval Association of Australia**



Australian Government  
Minister for Veterans' Affairs  
Minister for Defence Personnel

## Better supporting Defence and Veteran wellbeing 12 months on

Tuesday, 9 September 2025

**The Hon Matt Keogh MP**  
Minister for Veterans' Affairs  
Minister for Defence Personnel

Today marks one year since the release of the Final Report of the Royal Commission into Defence and Veteran Suicide, which made 122 recommendations to reform the culture, systems and processes across the Defence and veteran eco-system to prevent suicide and improve the mental health and wellbeing of serving personnel and veterans.

The Albanese Government has made significant progress in response, with nine recommendations fully implemented and 110 other recommendations underway.

This is the result of intensive and collaborative work across Government, building on the work undertaken on recommendations from the Royal Commission's Interim Report.

The Government's focus has been on reforms that address the immediate health and safety of current and former serving Australian Defence Force (ADF) personnel and their families.

This includes establishing a new legislated oversight body, the Defence and Veterans' Service Commission, which the Royal Commission called its most important recommendation. It will commence operations later this month.

Consultation and co-design work on a new agency for veteran wellbeing has been undertaken, and work is underway to establish it next year.

Work has already started on the terms of reference for the recommended inquiry into military sexual misconduct, with research to inform the inquiry also about to start.

This whole-of-Government effort on implementing the Royal Commission's recommendations will continue at pace.

The anniversary coincides with the release of the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare's (AIHW) report on suicide rates among ADF personnel and veterans; a sobering reminder of the importance of

implementing the recommendations of the Royal Commission as soon as possible.

While one death is too many, it's encouraging to see the suicide rate for ex-serving personnel has been declining in recent years.

Sadly, suicide remains the leading cause of death for younger and ex-serving members who separate from the ADF involuntarily, with higher rates of suicide than those who separate voluntarily.

This emphasises the importance of implementing Royal Commission recommendations to better support members in their transition as quickly as possible.

The findings of the 2025 AIHW report, together with the recommendations of the Royal Commission will help Defence and DVA better target our support.

***Quotes attributable to Minister for Veterans' Affairs and Defence Personnel, Matt Keogh MP:***

"The Royal Commission provided a once-in-a-generation opportunity for cultural change and reform. We heard harrowing experiences throughout the three-year inquiry.

"The Albanese Government is implementing meaningful and lasting reform in response to the findings, to be overseen by the statutory Defence and Veterans' Service Commission.

"Our focus has been, and will continue to be, on improving both the experience of our people and the supports in place for them and their families during and after service."

### **MEDIA NOTE:**

Discussion of these issues may be distressing for some people. All serving and former ADF personnel and their families should know that if they need support, they can contact Open Arms for free, 24 hours a day, seven days a week, on [1800 011 046](tel:1800011046) or visit [www.openarms.gov.au](http://www.openarms.gov.au), or Lifeline on [13 11 14](tel:131114) or by visiting [www.lifeline.org.au](http://www.lifeline.org.au). The Australian Institute of Health and Welfare reports are available on its website at [www.aihw.gov.au](http://www.aihw.gov.au)

The full speech delivered to Parliament on 4 September 2025 is available online at: [www.minister.defence.gov.au/speeches/2025-09-04/royal-commission-into-defence-veteran-suicide](http://www.minister.defence.gov.au/speeches/2025-09-04/royal-commission-into-defence-veteran-suicide)



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## Ghost Shark Contract Announced

The Ghost Shark (also known as Ghost Shark XL-AUV) is a long-range, extra-large autonomous underwater vehicle being jointly developed by Anduril Industries and the Australian Department of Defence (DoD) for the Royal Australian Navy (RAN). Three prototypes were ordered for the Royal Australian Navy and one for the United States Navy. The first of the submarines was publicly revealed in April 2024, and full-rate production for the RAN was announced in September 2025.

### Project history

Anduril Industries signed a contract with the Royal Australian Navy and the Defence Science and Technology Group (DSTG) in May 2022. Under this contract the company is required to produce three prototype autonomous submarines over three years. It is intended for a design that is suitable for manufacturing to be ready by mid-2025.<sup>[1]</sup> The submarines were named the 'Ghost Shark' in December 2022.<sup>[2]</sup> The project forms part of initiatives to modernise the RAN, complements crewed platforms, and will be sovereign Australian technology built in Australia. A number of other projects are also being undertaken to develop autonomous and uncrewed systems for the Australian Defence Force.

The first prototype Ghost Shark, which is designated 'Alpha', was publicly revealed in Sydney in April 2024. At this time, Anduril Australia and Defence stated that the project was running on budget and ahead of schedule. During the unveiling event, Anduril's senior vice president engineering stated that trials of the type had been underway "for some time", though he was unable to disclose for how long.

The *Australian Defence Magazine* has reported that the ADV *Guidance* auxiliary ship was likely acquired, in part, to support Ghost Shark trials.

In mid-2024, a Ghost Shark was flown to Hawaii on board a RAAF Boeing C-17 Globemaster transport aircraft during Exercise RIMPAC. The submarine will be used for trials in the United States. In August 2024, the Australian Government and Anduril reached an agreement to co-fund initial preparations for Ghost Sharks to be produced in large numbers in Australia.

On 20 August 2025, the Minister for Defence Industry, Pat Conroy, announced the Australian DoD is currently engaged in negotiating full rate production of the Ghost Shark XL-AUV. The fast-tracked decision to expand the program from a Systems Design & Development (SDD) stage directly to production was revealed after the contract to build three prototypes was delivered a year earlier than scheduled, and more than satisfied with the capability demonstrated, Government has the confidence to enter into full rate production by the end of 2025.

On 10 September 2025, the Minister for Defence, Richard Marles, announced that Australia was acquiring a fleet of 'dozens' of Ghost Shark XL-AUVs

*(Continued on page 4)*

*Below: Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Defence, the Hon Richard Marles MP and Minister for Defence Industry and Minister for Pacific Island Affairs the Hon. Pat Conroy MP announcing the contract with Anduril Australia to acquire a new fleet of Australian designed and built extra-large autonomous undersea vehicle – known as the Ghost Shark – for the Royal Australian Navy*



## Ghost Bat Capability Demonstration

On Friday 5 September, the Minister for Defence Industry the Hon. Pat Conroy held a media press and capability demonstration at Woomera Range Complex. Together with Senior Defence leaders - the Chief of Air Force, Air Marshal Stephen Chappell DSC CSC OAM, Deputy Secretary Capability Acquisition and Sustainment Group, Chris Deeble AO, CSC, Chief Defence Scientist, Professor Tanya Monro AC – and Ms Amy List from Boeing Defence Australia. Officials observed the latest capability demonstration of the MQ-28 Ghost Bat that included a test flight, and the opportunity engage with Defence and industry officials working on the MQ-28 Ghost Bat project

*Defence*

The Ghost Bat will have a range of more than 3,700 kilometres and has been designed to fly as a partner with crewed Air Force platforms. It enables Defence to investigate factors such as the level of automation and autonomy, use of artificial intelligence, and human machine teaming concepts that will ensure Australia's legal and ethical obligations are met.

More than 35 Australian companies have contributed to the Ghost Bat program. It is the first military combat aircraft to be designed, engineered and manufactured in Australia in more than 50 years.

*Air Force Social Media*

The Ghost Bat uncrewed aircraft is a pathfinder for the integration of autonomous systems and artificial intelligence to create smart human-machine teams. It is the result of an exciting collaboration between Air Force and Boeing Australia.

*Right: An MQ-28A Ghost Bat taxis after a test flight at Woomera, South Australia, 5th September, 2025.*

*Photo: Defence*



## Ghost Shark Contract Announced

*(Continued from page 3)*

in a A\$1.7 billion investment, entering service from early 2026.

### **Design**

Unlike conventional crewed submarines, the Ghost Shark XL-AUV will not have a conventional pressure hull, but will instead incorporate a 'flooded' design inside the hull spaces, with waterproof zones for key propulsion and navigation systems and payloads. This improves range and endurance, due to power supply and propulsion advantages, and allows the AUV to operate at extreme depths.

Anduril leveraged technology developed for the company's Dive-LD AUV, with the Ghost Shark's capability built upon an advanced AI / machine learning software framework known as Lattice, which controls the submersible's propulsion and navigation as well as its mission decision-making.

While no specifications have been released, the prototype revealed at Fleet Base East, Sydney Harbour was more than two metres high and much longer than its predecessor, the Anduril Dive-LD at 5.8 metres long.

### **Role and characteristics**

The Department of Defence has stated that the Ghost Shark will provide a "stealthy, long-range autonomous undersea warfare capability that can conduct persistent intelligence, surveillance, reconnaissance and strike, and enhance Navy's ability to operate with allies and partners".<sup>[5]</sup>

Details of the submarine's characteristics and intended missions have not been publicly released as of April 2024,<sup>[1]</sup> however AUVs are expected to augment Navy's submarine fleet by relieving crewed boats of resource-hungry, clandestine, submerged ISR and SIGINT missions, as well as potential deployment of seabed sentries and some offensive missions such as covert sea mine laying.

Chief of Navy Vice Admiral Mark Hammond stated that Ghost Shark could be launched from onshore and from warships.<sup>1</sup>

*Wikipedia*



## Last survivor of HMAS Canberra (I) laid to rest



### RIP Des Jones

Des Jones crossed the bar on 31 July 2025, nine days before the loss of HMAS Canberra (I) was marked in Canberra ACT on 9 August 2025 at a remembrance service hosted by the ACT Section of the Naval Association of Australia with the support of HMAS Harman and a five piece brass quintet from the Navy's Sydney Band. The memorial was inaugurated in 1982.

Located on the edge of Lake Burley Griffin, the strong westerly winds experienced in August sometimes give the attendees a feeling that they are on the open bridge of a naval ship in days gone by.

*Right: Chief of Navy, Vice Admiral Mark Hammond AO RAN lays a wreath at the memorial in Kings Park Canberra marking the loss of HMAS Canberra I and 84 of her ship's company which included members of the Royal Navy, Royal Australian Air Force and the US Navy*

*Above: Members of HMA Ships' Companies of Canberra, Penguin and Cerberus bearing the coffin of Leading Stoker Des Jones at his funeral at Mulwala Lawn Cemetery, Victoria on Friday 15 August 2025. Des Jones was the last living survivor of HMAS Canberra's loss, sunk in WWII during the Battle of Savo Island in which 84 crew members were killed or died of wounds as a result of the battle*

*Photos: Defence*



# 102 Years of Des Remembered

## SHEPPARTON News

Reported by

Emma Prior

20 August 2025



*Captain David McPherson RAN Commanding Officer HMAS Canberra (III) and CPO Peta Welldon hold Leading Stoker Des Jones' medals and floral tribute at the foot of his grave while the Coffin Bearers remove the White Ensign from his coffin*

*Photo: Defence*

Well-known Yarrowonga resident and WWII Navy veteran, 102-year-old Des Jones has been remembered as a laid back man, brave Navy stoker, husband, father, sportsman, volunteer and elder statesman.

Mr Jones, who passed away on July 31, was commemorated with a graveside service on August 15 by Navy chaplain David Hastie RAN with the Commanding Officer HMAS Canberra Captain David McPherson RAN reading a naval ode as well as presenting navy pins to Des' grandchildren.

Part of his eulogy, shared by 'adopted granddaughter' Laura Stahl, president of the HMAS Canberra and Shropshire Association Chris Johnson and Des' Yarrowonga best mate John Bastin follows.

### Extracts from the Eulogy

Desmond Grieve Jones was born on May 4, 1923, in Brunswick to Maude and Walter Jones.

"Des enlisted in the Royal Australian Navy on January 30, 1941, for wartime service. He had apparently spent some earlier time in the Army and had the good sense clearly to join the Senior Service as the Army was not for him.

"Enlisting at HMAS Lonsdale in Victoria officially as W1967, at the tender age of 17 ½, he became a Stoker 3rd Class and undertook his basic training in seamanship at HMAS Cerberus.

"On his 18th birthday in May 1941, he was promoted to Stoker 2nd Class and he continued at Cerberus until July 28, 1941. When the drafting's to sea came at the end of their initial training, Des was to go to HMAS Sydney.

"For some unknown reason, this never occurred, which was fortunate, as things for all of us, would have been very different if he had joined Sydney.

"Des instead was drafted to the Kent Class, County Cruiser HMAS Canberra which had just been as-

signed back to Australian waters operating around the western and southern coasts.

"Upon Des joining, Canberra resumed those operations until Japan entered the war in December 1941.

"On his 19th birthday in May 1942, Des was promoted to the rate of Stoker. Both Des and Canberra were present in Sydney Harbour during the Japanese midget submarine attack on May 31 – June 1, 1942.

"As August 8 became August 9, Stoker Jones, below decks in Canberra had just finished his watch in the boiler room and had cleaned himself up to join the fire party in the sick bay flat.

"It was a dark, cloudy night, pitch black with short sharp rain showers. Planes were heard in the darkness overhead.

"Des recalls a torpedo hit Canberra amidships in the boiler room, where he had been on duty less than two hours before, immediately killing four Stokers, one Petty Officer and completely disabling Canberra.

"Des recalls 'the Japanese continued to fire upon us, we could not fire back as we had no steam to operate the gun turrets and had no pumps to fight the fire. We just had to take cover and take it'.

"Des and a shipmate went to the low side of the ship and saw a Carly float in the water about 100 yards from them.

"It had proved to be a long night, Des was picked up by a US Navy ship.

"Survivors leave then ensured for Des upon his return home to Australia, but this was total war and he wasn't idle for long. Back at HMAS Cerberus, Des was spotted. Consequently Des was one of the 60 in the initial draft to Shropshire.

*(Continued on page 7)*



*(Continued from page 6)*

"Des served four tours of duty in HMAS Shropshire that included two Battle Tours. Des and Shroppie were together for the Arawe and Cape Gloucester campaigns in late 1943 and retook the Admiralty Islands and Hollandia in early 1944.

"Des and Shropshire were back in Sydney undergoing a refit and maintenance in preparation for sailing for her fifth tour of duty when Des was drafted ashore on June 30, 1944, just prior to Shropshire's sailing, to HMAS Melville in Darwin.

"Des would see out the rest of the war in and around the port of Darwin in various roles.

"Des was rated Acting Leading Stoker in Melville on November 1, 1944.

"In October 1945, Des was back in Victoria at HMAS Lonsdale where he was made Leading Stoker and later spent some time aboard HMAS Quiberon and HMAS Lachlan.

"Des was demobilised on July 24, 1946 at the age of 23.

In 2022, Des, Alan and myself (John Bastin) attended the 80th anniversary of the loss of the Canberra at Garden Island in Sydney and also Canberra.

"The sight of Des the Stoker and Admiral Guy Griffiths, also in his 99th year, chatting and swapping stories of their experiences epitomised the comradeship shared by all veterans.

"It was a great road trip and Des shared many stories of his vast experiences and adventures over a century of living.

"Des loved these events and started planning the next trip, usually the day after we got home.

"Our trip to Canberra for the Freedom of Entry Parade was a wonderful event and Des took on rockstar status, 101 years old rubbing shoulders with politicians, dignitaries, Navy hierarchy and living

*(Continued on page 8)*



Above: Des Jones lays a wreath at the memorial service held at the HMAS Canberra Memorial, Lake Burley Griffin, Canberra on 9 August 2022 marking the 80th anniversary of the sinking of HMAS Canberra I

Canberra Photos NAA ACT Section

Right: (l-r) Mr Des Jones and Chris Johnson after completion of the 80th anniversary of the loss of HMAS Canberra, held at Garden Island, Sydney.

Photo: Defence

Below: Des with three previous COs of HMAS Canberra (l-r) Captain Ashley Papp, CSC, RAN, ; Rear Admiral Chris Smith, CSM, RAN, ; Mr Des Jones and Commodore Raymond Leggett, AM, CSC, RAN at the memorial service held at the HMAS Canberra Memorial, Lake Burley Griffin, Canberra





*Right: Sir Peter Cosgrove leads Des from the 2025 Anzac Tribute Sydney Opera House together with War Widow Marguerite Ryan.*

*Photo by Giovanni Portelli*



*Left: 102-year-old Yarrawonga resident, WWII Navy Veteran Des Jones assisted by 'adopted granddaughter' Laura Stahl meet Sir Peter Cosgrove with Navy Widow Marguerite Ryan looking on at the Anzac Tribute Reception at NSW Parliament House in April this year.*

*Photo: Giovanni Portelli*

*(Continued from page 7)*

relatives of HMAS Canberra sailors was memorable.

"In April this year, Des was invited by former Governor General Sir Peter Cosgrove to attend the Anzac Day eve Sunset Tribute at the Opera House.

"Des, Laura and Brent made the trip where his spirit and determination shone through. Des even backed up the next day, Anzac Day and lead The Canberra Shropshire Association march through Sydney City, doing selfies with his new besties Normie Rowe and Little Pattie."

"He was optimistic to the end."

#### **Tributes flow for Des**

Former Governor-General of Australia Sir Peter Cosgrove, who wheeled Des into the 2025 Anzac Tribute at the Sydney Opera House, shared his condolences and respect for the bravery displayed by Des in his time in the Navy.

"I give a final salute to Des Jones," Sir Cosgrove said.

"Des being the last survivor of HMAS Canberra, it was a great honour to welcome him as the WWII

Navy Veteran of Honour at this year's Anzac Tribute at the Sydney Opera House.

"As a resident of Yarrawonga, Des in fact travelled to Sydney from Victoria twice in recent months, once for the Anzac tribute and again a month later for the Anzac tribute reception held at NSW Parliament House.

"Des was a wonderful Australian and his life and service to our nation will never be forgotten."

**The Kent Class Cruiser that was to become HMAS Canberra was**

**laid down 100 Years ago;**

**on 9 September 1925 ;**

**launched on 31 May 1927;**

**commissioned 9 July 1928**



## Loss of HMAS Canberra (I) remembered in the Solomon Islands

In August 2025, the Australian Defence Force (ADF) supported the Forum Fisheries Agency's (FFA) third maritime surveillance operation of 2025, Operation ISLAND CHIEF. Through FFA operations, contributing nations work together to coordinate maritime and aerial surveillance patrols in their EEZs to combat illegal, unreported and unregulated (IUU) fishing



*Above: Solomon Islands Prime Minister, The Hon Jeremiah Manele MP, lays a wreath during the HMAS Canberra (I) memorial service in Honiara, Solomon Islands.*



*Left: Royal Australian Navy, Commander Khan Beaumont, CSC, Surveillance Operations Officer Solomon Islands, recites the Naval Ode during the HMAS Canberra (I) memorial service in Honiara*

*Defence*

and transnational crime. Under Operation SOLANIA, the ADF deployed a Royal Australian Air Force C-27J Spartan aircraft, crew and support personnel from No. 35 Squadron to the Solomon Islands. Operation SOLANIA is the ADF contribution to maritime surveillance within the Pacific region. ADF personnel and assets assigned to

Operation SOLANIA provide intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance (ISR) support through the FFA to Pacific island countries (PIC), which in turn supports their economic development through the protection of fisheries and other resources

## Rowed across the Pacific



The RAN has supported the Australian Border Force in welcoming the Scottish Maclean brothers to Cairns, Australia. A rigid-hulled inflatable boat (RHIB) from ADV Cape Peron ferried Australian Border Force officers out to sea where they met with the brothers to conduct passport and quarantine checks, prior to the brothers making land after 140 straight days of rowing from Peru to Australia. The RAN was proud to support the final leg of these fellow mariners who undertook the feat to raise money for clean water projects in Madagascar

*Left: ADV Cape Peron Commanding Officer, LCDR Harrison Ingham with Maclean brothers (L-R) Ewan, Lachlan and Jamie, in Cairns, QLD.*

*Defence*

## Navy Facts Sheet - Base Development

# STAY ONBOARD

## PEOPLE FIRST

Setting the foundation for sustained growth

### Workplace Experience

Base redevelopment-  
accommodation options

**Navy Infrastructure is working with Security and Estate Group nationwide to rationalise, refurbish and where possible, deliver new, modern transit, training and permanent Living-In Accommodation.**

### Benefits

- Living-In Accommodation across our bases and establishments is rationalised, modern, and suitable for Navy People.
- Sufficient Living-In Accommodation exists on base or close to where Navy People work.
- Living-In Accommodation and associated welfare and well-being facilities are of a standard where Navy People preference this accommodation over other options

### Next Steps

- HMAS Cerberus redevelopment — due practical completion mid-2023.
- HMAS Creswell new Living-In Accommodation due for completion in mid-2023.

- HMAS Watson redevelopment — due practical completion April 2026.
- Capability projects across the country — ongoing
  - ◇ Improved workforce amenity at HMAS Albatross as part of SEA9100 and SEA129-5 for logistics helicopters and un-crewed aerial aircraft.
  - ◇ Further improved workforce amenity with combined HMAS Albatross Redevelopment. Planning due to commence in 2029.

Defence Workforce Growth Initiatives — planning commenced early 2022 for delivery 2025-2035.

### More Information

Navy infrastructure works in close partnership with Shore Force in Fleet Command and particularly with the Security and Estate Group. They also have a level of engagement with external bodies including other Defence Groups, Industry and States/Territories

Status: Work Underway Lead: Head Navy Capability

#### TARGETING

All Navy Personnel

#### WHEN

2023-2035

#### YOU GET

Rationalised, refurbished or where possible, new modern accommodation

## Naval Ship Building agreement with Austal at Henderson WA



On 28 August 2025, the Strategic Shipbuilding Agreement between Defence and Austal Defence Australia was signed at the Navy Capability Centre in Henderson, Western Australia. Head Patrol Boats and Specialist Ships, RADM Michael Houghton signed the Agreement on behalf of the Commonwealth. The Austal representative Paddy Gregg – Austal Chief Executive Officer signed the Agreement on behalf of Austal

This is a significant milestone in the Henderson Consolidation Program, as the Strategic Shipbuilding Agreement will facilitate continuous naval shipbuilding by consolidating industry at Henderson around the Strategic Shipbuilder, delivering on key priorities outlined in the 2024 National Defence Strategy

Defence



## Submarine Rotational Force – West Infrastructure Project

### Overview

From as early as 2027, AUKUS partners will have a rotational presence at HMAS Stirling of one UK and up to 4 US, conventionally armed, nuclear-powered submarines. This rotational presence of UK and US nuclear-powered submarines at HMAS Stirling will be known as Submarine Rotational Force – West (SRF-West).

In preparation for SRF-West, infrastructure at HMAS Stirling will be upgraded and enhanced to meet the requirements for conventionally-armed, nuclear-powered submarines – both for visiting and rotational submarines and for Australia's own nuclear-powered submarines in the future.

### Australia's Nuclear-Powered Submarine Program

On 14 March 2023, the United Kingdom (UK) and the United States (US) – the AUKUS partners – jointly announced the [Optimal Pathway](#) for Australia to acquire conventionally armed, nuclear-powered submarines.

SRF-West will help Australia build the necessary operational capabilities and skills to be sovereign ready, so Australia can safely and securely own, operate, maintain and regulate a fleet of conventionally-armed, nuclear-powered submarines from the early 2030s.

### Community information

Consulting with stakeholders and local communities is an integral part of the planning process. Defence is committed to ensuring the views and interests of key stakeholders and communities can inform planning and implementation across all phases of the Project.

### Public Works Committee approval

The SRF-West Priority Works project was referred to the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Public Works (PWC) on 6 June 2024.

Defence held community information sessions in Rockingham in July 2024, focusing on the PWC process. Defence listened to feedback from local community and key stakeholders. The feedback was consolidated and submitted to the PWC. The PWC conducted a public hearing on 2 August 2024.

The project received parliamentary expediency on 22 August 2024. The PWC Report is available on the Parliament of Australia website.

### Environmental approval

Defence is committed to ensuring the project meets the requirements of the *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999* (EPBC Act).

The SRF-West Priority Works project has been approved under the *Environment Protection and Bio-*

*diversity Conservation Act 1999* (EPBC number 2024/10031).

Further information is available on the project's environmental compliance page at Submarine Rotational Force – West | Defence.

### Roads and transport

Defence recognises the importance of adequate transport planning and local road upgrades in line with the increase in Defence activities at HMAS Stirling.

Defence works closely with the City of Rockingham and WA State Government on transport studies, including identifying opportunities for road upgrades to improve traffic flow for the local community. This cooperation includes a specific study on the Cape Peron Transport Needs that has been developed by the City of Rockingham under the Cape Peron Planning Investigation Area.

### Housing

Defence Housing Australia (DHA) has signed 3 contracts with Western Australian businesses to deliver 550 additional new households for Defence personnel and their families close to Fleet Base West over the next 5 years. The new homes will be leased to DHA and provide accommodation close to Fleet Base West, HMAS Stirling.

These agreements form part of DHA's New Builds Volume Leasing Program and importantly will see developer Parcel Property, alongside local home builders Forma Homes and Plunkett Homes, expand local housing supplies.

The agreements follow an expression of interest period seeking industry participants who can deliver new properties using their own land, land source from the market, or a combination.

### Project details

#### Timeframe

Early construction works began in 2024 following Parliamentary approval in late 2023. Main construction works commenced in August 2025 following environmental approval.

*Australian Submarine Agency*



## ACH *Esmeralda* visits Sydney

*Esmeralda* is one of the largest and oldest tall-ships in the world, pulling into Sydney as the seventh port on her voyage, having previously visited Jakarta, Indonesia. She has now departed Sydney for Papeete, a French-Polynesian island in the Pacific Ocean.

Navy weapons electrical engineering officer Lieutenant Planck joined the vessel in Japan with representatives of other navies for her journey to Australia. He said he loved the experience, even if it took time to adjust.

"I didn't speak any Spanish when I joined. I picked up a little bit, but thankfully, they spoke a lot of English. It made life easier," Lieutenant Planck said. "It was nothing like I'd ever done before. It was so special to be able to get involved with so many other countries."

The Australian and Chilean navies have a strong relationship dating back 80 years. Recently the RAN sold two former Adelaide-class frigates, HMA Ships *Melbourne* and *Newcastle*, to the Armada de Chile (ACH) and the ACH has also participated with the RAN on a number of exercises, such as Exercise Rim of the Pacific (RIMPAC).

In Sydney, the crew hosted a number of ship tours and engagements at their berth in Woolloomooloo.

Commander of the Australian Fleet Rear Admiral Christopher Smith met ACH Chief of the General Staff of the Navy Vice Admiral Raúl Zamorano Goñi. This was Vice Admiral Zamorano's first navy-to-navy talk with the RAN since assuming the role in 2023, stating that 'It was so special to be able to get involved with so many other countries.'

*Esmeralda* remains a beacon for international relations for Chile and a cornerstone of their training capability.

For Lieutenant Planck, the journey followed in the footsteps of his close colleague and fellow New Entry Officers Course (NEOC) graduate, Lieutenant Jacqui Dendle, who completed a similar voyage on the same vessel six years earlier. In 2019, then-midshipman Dendle was selected from the NEOC 60 cohort of 162 graduates for her outstanding performance throughout the course. Shortly after graduation, she deployed for five months in *Esmeralda* from July 9 to December 7, 2019.

Lieutenant Dendle's voyage was a sweeping trans-Pacific and Asian tour, taking in China, Hawaii, Indonesia, Japan, the Republic of Korea, French Polynesia and New Zealand. Her experience provided a unique perspective on the global role of navies in fostering international partnerships.

"My time in *Esmeralda* is a very special memory that will last a lifetime and to now share that bond



Crowds line the wharf to welcome Armada de Chile vessel Training Ship *Esmeralda* as she enters Fleet Base East, Sydney, New South Wales.

Photo LSIS Lauren Pugsley

with Harry (Lieutenant Planck) means the world to me," Lieutenant Dendle said. "I am very thankful for the opportunity and the enduring friendships made."

In 2024, Lieutenant Planck was awarded the King's Gold Medal for exemplary conduct, performance of duty and achievement during officer training.. First awarded in 1916, it is one of the Navy's oldest and most prestigious awards. As a result, Lieutenant Planck was selected to represent the RAN on board *Esmeralda*.

He joined the ship on June 14 in Japan, and the four-masted barquentine has taken him through key international ports, including Osaka, Shanghai and Jakarta, before returning him to Sydney on August 12.

"This has been one of the most enriching experiences of my naval career," Lieutenant Planck said. "Sailing on *Esmeralda* is more than just a deployment. It is a chance to establish lifelong friendships with guests from many other navies, and knowing that Jacqui stood on these decks years ago makes it even more meaningful.

Defence

*Esmeralda* is a four masted Barquentine

Keel laid	1946
Launched	12 May 1953
Length	113 m
Beam	13.11m
Speed	13 knots on motor 17 knots under sail
Crew	300 plus 90 trainees
Originally she was a four masted topsail schooner	



## Royal Navy's Hydrographic eXploitation Group (HXG)



**The Royal Navy's new-look (above) specialist survey teams are ready to use enhanced capabilities to support the Senior Service's global mission after completing several years of transformation.**

That information can directly impact operations, increasing littoral access and manoeuvre, understanding of the environment or help cartographers redraw charts of the oceans with greater accuracy for the safety and benefit of all seafarers.

After many years merged with the Royal Navy's meteorological experts as the Fleet Hydrographic and Meteorological Unit, the two branches have now parted company.

In their place, two new units: one dedicated to surveying and hydrography, the other to all things meteorological, hence the Hydrographic eXploitation and the Metoc Information Warfare Groups (HXG and MIWG respectively).

The separation is part of a broader transformation of survey/hydrographic operations which is shifting the Navy away from traditional survey ships such as HMS Echo and Enterprise in favour of small rapidly deployable teams, autonomous systems, and 11 and 15-metre Vahana survey motor boats for sustained, detailed work.

After months of training and making use of the panoply of new kit, the HXG is now at full operational capability - able to support front-line operations and conduct hydrographic missions wherever needed - prompting a roll-out of its craft and equipment at Morice Yard in Devonport Naval Base.

Aside from the Vahanas, which are capable of conducting detailed hydrographic surveys using multi-beam echo-sounders, HXG can call upon a number of state-of-the-art Autonomous Underwater Vehicles (AUVs) which can efficiently and precisely carry out surveys of the seabed for charting and wider defence purposes.

The arrival and deployment of the new capabilities on show today is a game changer and, alongside pending developments in larger autonomous platforms - under the Future Military Data Gathering programme - makes for an exciting future for the Hydrographic Exploitation Group.

*Royal Navy News*

*Right: 11m Survey Motor Boat conducting surveys in Portsmouth Harbour*

*(Photo: Portsmouth **Proud**).*



## DVA Contacts

### DVA Contact numbers

- Provider invoicing & billing enquiries: [1300 550 017](tel:1300550017)
- Provider enquiries: [1800 550 457](tel:1800550457)
- Transport bookings: [1800 550 455](tel:1800550455)
- [Veterans' Affairs Pharmaceutical Advisory Centre](#) (VAPAC): [1800 552 580](tel:1800552580)

### 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](tel:1800555677) then ask for 1800 838 372
- Speak and Listen users phone [1800 555 727](tel:1800555727) then ask for 1800 838 372
- Internet relay users connect to the [NRS](#) then ask for 1800 838 372

### Claims Progress

As at 31 July 2025, DVA had 83,822 claims on hand, comprised of 16,036 unallocated claims and 67,786 claims being processed.

In the financial year to date (1 July 2025 to 31 July 2025):

- DVA received 10,144 claims
- DVA made 9,914 determinations
- For all claims on hand including older claims being processed, in 2025-26 the average TTTP for MRCA IL was 326 days in July 2025 up from 315 days in 2024-25. The median TTTP was 264 days.

There have already been some significant improvements in processing timeframes for new IL claims received and determined within the last 12 months.

For claims received within the last 12 months, the average TTTP for MRCA IL was 111 days. The median TTTP was 97 days.

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

#### PHONE NUMBER:

Telephone:

[1800 VETERAN \(1800 838 372\)](tel:1800VETERAN)

International callers:

[+61 2 6289 1133](tel:+61262891133)

#### POSTAL ADDRESS FOR ALL STATES AND TERRITORIES:

Health Approvals & Home Care Section department of Veterans' Affairs

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](mailto: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](http://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 confirm your diagnosis.
- **Step 2:** Supply the documents you need to;
- **Step 3:** Check if you are already eligible for free health care and treatment.

**OPEN**  
Veterans & Families  
Counselling  
**ARMS**  
**1800 011 046**



**SAFE ZONE  
SUPPORT**

FREE ANONYMOUS  
COUNSELLING LINE  
CALL 1800 142 072

**Defence  
Family  
Helpline**



**1800 624 608**

**Defence  
All-hours  
Support Line**



**1800 628 036**