



National Bosun's Call



Vol 6 No 1

Once Navy, Always Navy

February 2025

First Arafura class Offshore Patrol Vessel delivered



30 January 2025

Defence has accepted the first Arafura class Offshore Patrol Vessel, NUSHIP *Arafura*, for further test and evaluation ahead of delivery to the Royal Australian Navy.

NUSHIP *Arafura* is the first of class vessel delivered under project SEA 1180, built by Luerksen Australia at the Osborne Naval Shipyard in South Australia.

This project will deliver six Arafura class Offshore Patrol Vessels to Navy, with the first two constructed at Osborne. The remaining four vessels are under construction at Henderson in Western Australia.

The Arafura class vessels will be part of a wider Navy Minor War Vessel Fleet supporting civil maritime security and enhanced regional engagement

in the Southwest Pacific and maritime Southeast Asia.

Deputy Secretary Naval Shipbuilding and Sustainment Jim McDowell said the delivery of the first Arafura class Offshore Patrol Vessel was an important milestone in the Australian Government's investment in Naval Shipbuilding and Sustainment.

"The delivery of the first of class vessel to Defence highlights Defence's commitment to working through complex projects to deliver critical capability to our Australian Defence Force, built here in Australia," Mr McDowell said.

NUSHIP *Arafura* will now sail to its homeport at HMAS *Stirling* in Western Australia, before commissioning into the Royal Australian Navy fleet later this year.



National Newsletter of the
Naval Association of Australia

Michael Manthorpe PSM Appointed Interim Head of the Defence and Veterans' Service Commission

Friday, 17 January 2025

The Hon Richard Marles MP
Deputy Prime Minister
Minister for Defence

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

The Federal Government is continuing to deliver on its response to the Royal Commission into Defence and Veteran Suicide through swift action on key recommendations.

The Government has appointed Mr Michael Manthorpe PSM as the Interim Head of the Defence and Veterans' Service Commission. Mr Manthorpe will head the interim organisation and work across government to deliver the establishment of a legislated oversight body by September 2025.

This appointment is a significant milestone in implementing recommendation 122 of the Royal Commission's Final Report.

Mr Manthorpe has served in the Australian Public Service for 37 years, including as Commonwealth Ombudsman, which incorporates the roles of Defence Force Ombudsman, among others, from 2017 to 2021.

The Government is committed to the delivery of the entity which will provide independent oversight and evidence-based advice to improve suicide prevention, and drive better outcomes for serving and ex-serving ADF personnel.

As part of the Government's response to the Royal Commission, it has committed \$9.5 million of funding, as part of MYEFO, to support its implementation, including:

1. \$5 million over two years to fund the appointment of the Interim Head of the Defence and Veterans' Service Commission, and to establish a cross agency taskforce to provide advice to Government; and
2. \$4.5 million in 2024-25 to fund consultations for both a new agency within DVA focused on veteran wellbeing and a new peak body for ex-service organisations.



CPM Reviews

Michael Manthorpe is an independent consultant in public administration, having recently retired from a fulltime public service career which spanned 37 years.

Michael has accrued extensive corporate, policy and strategy experience. He is highly adept at organisational process and practice review and diagnostic and reform projects. He has a particular interest in helping to provide assurance about the design and delivery of complex policies and programs so as to bring together the goals of Government, expressed through administrative systems and the needs of the citizenry.

Michael was the Commonwealth Ombudsman from 2017-21. As Ombudsman, he oversaw the administrative actions of, and investigated and reported on complaints about, almost the entirety of the Australian Public Service (APS), law enforcement agencies, Australia Post, private health insurers and various other entities. He was also the Defence Force, Immigration and ACT Ombudsman. He was the CEO of an office of around 300 people.

As Ombudsman, Michael engaged extensively with a range of Ministers, Parliamentarians, Secretaries and Agency Heads on a plethora of delicate, contestable issues, all of which called for careful judgement, excellent stakeholder engagement skills, independence and professional integrity.

In the course of his career Michael has worked on and led reforms spanning workplace relations, the labour market, early childhood education, school building and immigration. He led major organisational reforms at Deputy Secretary level, including the bringing together of Customs and Immigration functions and standing up the Australian Border Force, in what is now the Home Affairs portfolio. He also led an array of complex and sensitive program delivery functions, including the visa, refugee and citizenship programs; employment and labour market programs; and early childhood payments and reforms.

Michael is the Deputy President, Councillor and Chair of the Corporate Governance Committee of the Institute of Public Administration Australia (IPAA) in the ACT. He was awarded a Fellowship of IPAA for his outstanding contribution to public service in 2021. He was awarded the Public Service Medal in 2010 for his role in leading the Government's response to the insolvency of ABC Learning, which was then Australia's largest childcare provider.

The Naval Association of Australia Inc Patron-in-Chief His Majesty, King Charles III
ABN 56 653 989 978

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Government's response to the Royal Commission's Final Report

2 December 2024

Overview

On 2 December 2024, the Government provided its response to the [Royal Commission's Final Report](#), which was tabled by the Government on 9 September. The Report marked the culmination of the most comprehensive inquiry ever conducted into suicide and suicidality in the Defence and veteran communities.

The Government has accepted the overwhelming majority of the Final Report's recommendations and will address the issues identified by the Royal Commission through a wide-ranging and substantial program of reform.

At the outset, the Government has highlighted the central importance of establishing a new statutory oversight body to drive system reform in response to recommendation 122, and work will begin immediately.

- It will provide independent oversight and evidence-based advice to improve suicide prevention and drive better outcomes for serving and ex-serving ADF personnel.
- As an independent statutory body, its work will be ongoing.

The Government will establish a Taskforce within the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet to ensure the implementation of the Government's reform package. The Taskforce will prioritise actions to ensure the immediate health and safety of Defence personnel and veterans, including the implementation of recommendations to address sexual misconduct and unacceptable behaviour. It will draw on expertise from across Government.

Importantly, the Government has funded DVA to begin consultation with the veteran community on the establishment of a new DVA agency with a focus on wellbeing, and the establishment of a peak body for ex-service organisations.

The Government's response does not mark the end of the work that must be done to drive down veteran suicide. Rather, it marks the beginning of a substantial and long-term program of reform across Defence, DVA and the veteran support system more broadly.

We will continue to work in partnership with Defence, other agencies and the veteran community to make the most of this once-in-a-generation opportunity to achieve meaningful change.

Some of the recommendations are large, complex and intersecting.

Reform will take time, and this is the start of a reform process however we are committed to moving forward with the Government Response.

DVA is committed to listening to feedback and suggestions from the veteran community to ensure we get this reform right.

We will share more information as the implementation process moves forward.

We thank everyone who bravely told their story and came forward to give their evidence to the Royal Commission. Their courage made a difference and will continue to do so.

We also thank the Commissioners for their work.

[Australian Government Response](#)

Media Release - Minister Keogh - Historic Reform for Veterans' and Families' Benefits Passes the Parliament

Department of Veterans' Affairs

OFFICIAL



THE HON MATT KEOGH MP
MINISTER FOR VETERANS' AFFAIRS
MINISTER FOR DEFENCE PERSONNEL

MEDIA RELEASE

13 FEBRUARY 2025

HISTORIC REFORM FOR VETERANS' AND FAMILIES' BENEFITS PASSES THE PARLIAMENT

Today, Parliament has passed the most significant legislative reform of Australia's veteran support system in a century.

The Royal Commission into Defence and Veteran Suicide's Interim Report recommended the urgent simplification and harmonisation of the veteran compensation and rehabilitation system. The Final Report recommended the establishment of a new statutory entity to provide independent oversight of system reform now known as the Defence and Veterans' Service Commission.

The Albanese Government promised to act, and we have.

The *Veterans' Entitlements, Treatment and Support (Simplification and Harmonisation) Act 2024 – the VETS Act* - will bring the three current systems governing veterans' entitlements under a single Act: an improved [Military Rehabilitation and Compensation Act 2004 \(MRCA\)](#).

This reform will make it easier for veterans and families to understand their entitlements, simpler for advocates to support veterans making DVA claims, and it will streamline claims processing within the Department of Veterans' Affairs.

This all means veterans and families will be able to access the benefits and supports that they need and deserve, faster.

When the changes come into effect on 1 July 2026, no veteran will see a reduction in their current payments.

This legislation will open up a pathway to a Gold Card for many veterans that were previously not eligible.

New claims made after 1 July 2026 will all come under the improved MRCA. Some current payment recipients, such as the *Safety, Rehabilitation and Compensation (Defence-related Claims) Act 1988 (DRCA)* incapacity payment recipients, will transfer to MRCA incapacity payments on commencement, resulting in an increase in payments.

We have consulted extensively over the last two years with veterans, families, advocates and a wide range of ex-service organisations on this legislation to make sure we got these reforms right.

Veterans currently under the DRCA will also have access to appeal DVA decisions to the Veteran Review Board for the first time from early April 2025.

To further ensure the VETS Act and future reform provide the best wellbeing outcomes for veterans and families, the Defence and Veterans' Service Commission has now been enshrined into legislation. The Commission will improve suicide prevention and wellbeing outcomes for serving and ex-serving Australia Defence Force members through the provision of independent, evidence-based advice on system reform to the Australian Government.

Thank you to everyone who has played a role in this historic reform, which will benefit veterans and families for generations to come.

For more information on the new legislation, visit [the DVA website](#).

MEDIA CONTACT:

DVA Media: media.team@dva.gov.au

Media note – case studies have been developed to ascertain how these changes may impact the personal circumstances of veterans. Visit - <https://www.dva.gov.au/about/royal-commission/veterans-legislation-reform/veterans-legislation-reform-scenarios/scenarios-single-ongoing-act-consultation>

Cyclone Tracy—Book Review

CYCLONE WARRIORS: THE ARMED FORCES AND CYCLONE TRACY DECEMBER 1974-JUNE 1975

By **DR TOM LEWIS** *Avonmore Books*; \$39.95

BEYOND OFFICIAL REPORTS, this story of the ADF's role in saving Darwin has never been told as a well-researched narrative. *Cyclone Warriors* redresses that oversight. The author, Tom Lewis, lived in Darwin while still serving in the Navy and remained as resident for many years afterwards. His body of work on the bombing of Darwin in 1942 is complemented by *Cyclone Warriors* which reminds those who remember Cyclone Tracy, and reveals to those who do not, the scale of the destruction wrought on an unprepared town and its residents about to celebrate Christmas in 1974.

The three separate services, RAN, Army and RAAF, would not be badged collectively as the ADF until 1976, but they operated effectively as a joint command in the first days and weeks of this civil emergency. They were subordinate to the newly formed and very small Federal National Disasters Organisation, not under martial law but as military aid to the civil power.

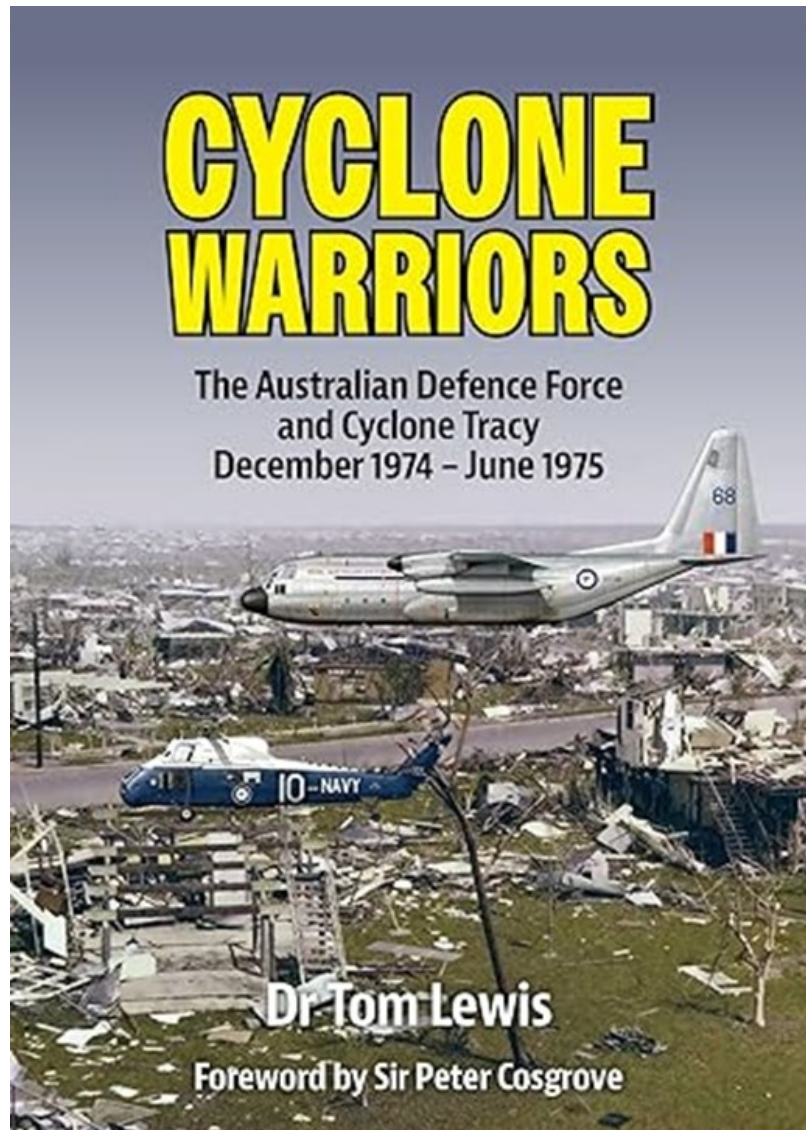
Cyclone Warriors concentrates on the first intense period of rescue in January and February 1975, but also points out that the Army stayed on undertaking infrastructure recovery until May, and did a superb job of reconstruction that enabled civilian contractors to rebuild the much more resilient Darwin that exists today.

Cyclone Warriors is a good social history and a reminder that, on this island continent, in an age of climate change, we can expect severe and unpredictable natural events which will test the limits of the state and federal agencies, including the ADF. They will no doubt be expected to emulate in skill, hardihood and endurance those who responded when Tracy blew in, just in time for Christmas, half a century ago.

Review By LCDR Des Woods RAN Rtd

Utube

[Home | Cyclone Warriors](#)



Editor's Note

The back cover of the book states in part:

"Cyclone Tracy was one of the most damaging disasters to ever impact Australia. The story of the terrible night ... has been told before, but the involvement of the Australian Defence Force has been under-emphasised."

"The book argues strongly that the National Emergency Medal should be bestowed on all uniformed people involved, including civilian such as police, and that a prominent and fitting memorial be established in Darwin"

In 2022 the Naval Association supported a group of naval veterans who sought recognition for their contribution to the relief of Darwin immediately after it was hit by Cyclone Tracy. The proposal was supported by the Northern Territory's Chief Minister, Natasha Fyles in June 2022, A letter was sent in August 2022 to the Northern Territory's member of the House of Representatives for the electorate of Solomon, the Hon Luke Gosling OAM . A reply was not received.



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Mr Russell Pettis
Editor
White Ensign Magazine
Naval Association of Australia
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Dear Mr Pettis

Thank you for your recent correspondence requesting support in recognising the Royal Australian Navy (RAN) personnel who worked in Darwin during Operation Navy Help 1975, by way of retrospectively awarding the National Emergency Medal

Remaining until 31 January 1975, the RAN provided up to 1200 personnel every day to assist in restoring infrastructure and rebuilding the city. It is therefore not inconsequential that the Lord Mayor of Darwin, Mr Harry Tiger Brennan later said: "We owe the Navy the greatest debt of .all,"

There is no doubt that without the significant contribution of Navy personnel during Cyclone Tracy and in the clean up after the devastation, the recovery of civilian order and hope for the future for Territorians may have taken a longer time to achieve.

In considering your request for support, I understand that in order to achieve your aspiration of having Cyclone Tracy recognised as a nationally significant emergency, amendment to the National Emergency Medal Regulations 2011 (the Regulations) is required.

The appropriate authority to achieve this action lies with the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet. In response to your request for support, I have written to the Prime Minister advocating a reconsideration of the Regulations governing the eligibility criteria for the National Emergency Medal.

I understand that you have engaged with Mr Luke Gosling MP, Member for Solomon, who is an ex-serving Australian Defence Force (ADF) member and as such, a keen advocate for ADF personnel recognition, where appropriate. I believe that Mr Gosling will be an enthusiastic and key stakeholder in your plan to achieve this recognition.

I wish you every success in your endeavours.

Kind regards

A handwritten signature in dark ink that reads "Natasha".

NATASHA FYLES-

9 Jun 2022



THE NAVAL ASSOCIATION OF AUSTRALIA
NATIONAL COUNCIL

Patron in Chief Her Majesty the Queen

Patron: His Excellency General the Honourable David Hurley AC DSC FTSE

2 August 2022

The Honourable Luke Gosling OAM MP
Member for Solomon
House of Representatives
PO Box 43300
Casuarina NT 0810

Dear Mr Gosling,

REQUEST FOR SUPPORT TO EXTEND ELIGIBILITY FOR NATIONAL EMERGENCY MEDAL

The Naval Association of Australia (NAA) has supported a campaign by naval veterans ,who participated in Operation Darwin Navy Help in 1975 to assist Darwin to recover after the devastation of Cyclone Tracy, to be officially recognised by the Australian Government for their contribution. The promulgation of the National Emergency Medal (NEM) in 2011 has created the ideal vehicle to provide that recognition. However as the naval veterans group have approached Government Agencies and some politicians to seek their support, they have been greeted with a range of negative responses including:

- The matter was too long ago (1975) for action now.
- The NEM was promulgated in 2011 and is not a retrospective award.
- It requires political sponsorship as the Act covering the NEM - *National Emergency Medal Regulations 2011*-needs to be amended in the Federal Parliament. There was a reluctance to be involved.

The impact of Cyclone Tracy was devastating and as a Temtorian, I am sure you are aware of the pain and suffering the damage caused to both people and property was horrendous. As the Chief Minister mentions in her letter (attached), the City of Darwin owes the Navy the greatest debt of all I have attached papers describing the work done by all ADF Agencies in supporting the immediate aftermath of the Cyclone and we believe there is a clear case to award the NEM or equivalent to all parties involved in the Operation Navy Darwin Help in 1975.

It is the request of the NAA that consideration be actively pursued to amend the NEM Regulations to facilitate the award of the NEM to all those ADF and civilian service personnel who actively participated in the recovery operation , based on eligibility criteria to be established. We are asking your office to work with us to facilitate passage of the amendments necessary through the Federal Parliament to allow special circumstances to be considered and subject to parliamentary approval.

The 50th anniversary of the Cyclone Tracy disaster will occur in December 2025 and the NAA feels it would be a fitting tribute, from a grateful nation , to award the NEM to those personnel who answered the call for help, during the annual Christmas leave period. They returned to their ships and crash sailed for Darwin from Sydney, via Brisbane and Townsville with only a few hours preparation. Upon arrival they were confronted with the horrific aftermath of the Cyclone and subsequently spent weeks securing and making Darwin safe.

I think you would agree that it is a very worthwhile cause and we are seeking your full support for the campaign. It is noteworthy that Captain Bob Dagworthy RAN Rtd. is a current member of the NM and he was the Commanding Officer of HMAS ARROW , the Patrol Boat sunk in Darwin Harbour during the cyclone with sadly, the loss of life.

On behalf of more than 3000 people, the NM is keen to find a positive outcome for this most deserving situation. We look forward to hearing from you soon. Whilst the NM does not have an active organisation in Darwin at the moment . our National President resides in the Greater Canberra area and would be happy to meet with you when you are next in Parliament.

Yours sincerely,

D Manolas

National President

R Pettis

National Secretary

Defence

Remembering Cyclone Tracy 50 years on



It has been 50 years since Cyclone Tracy struck Darwin on Christmas Eve 1974. The Category 4 cyclone, with winds over 217km/h, damaged 70 per cent of Darwin's homes, leaving 41,000 people homeless.

Almost the entire city was uninhabitable.

The event resulted in 66 fatalities, including two Navy personnel from HMAS *Arrow* – Petty Officer Leslie Catton and Able Seaman Ian Rennie – and four Naval dependents (two wives and two children who were killed in the married quarters while their loved ones were on duty). About 145 people were seriously injured and more than 500 left with minor injuries.

Survivors of *Arrow* told of the Darwin Harbour conditions when Tracy struck, of mountainous seas

whipped up by 170-knot winds into “crashing dumpers” and ships sinking all around them.

Australia's armed forces soon rallied from around the country, reporting to their place of duty, often without orders.

Australia's Navy launched its largest peacetime disaster relief operation, involving 13 ships and 11 aircraft.

Then Defence Minister Lance Barnard said Navy had capacity to provide a skilled workforce in Darwin without imposing on the city's limited facilities.

“Because of this, the Navy has been chosen for the major task of restoring Darwin's essential services

(Continued on page 9)



A Navy Wessex helicopter hovers over Darwin in the aftermath of Cyclone Tracy in 1975.

Photo: Then Chief Petty Officer Kev Bristow

Defence

Remembering Cyclone Tracy 50 years on

(Continued from page 8)

and clearing up the worst hit suburbs," he said.

Australia's armed forces soon rallied from around the country, reporting to their place of duty, often without orders.

The first Navy asset to reach Darwin was an HS748 aircraft on December 26, delivering medical equipment and Red Cross workers. Additional ships and aircraft quickly followed.

HS748 aircraft ferried personnel and stores to Darwin and evacuees south.

The task force undertook massive relief efforts, clearing debris, repairing homes and restoring essential services.

Helicopters transported 7832 passengers and 110,912kg of freight, and made 2505 landings.

Air Force's Squadron Leader Bill Fewster and his team were the first C-130 crew to depart Richmond for Darwin on Christmas Day.

On board was a medical team and emergency supplies but, while en route, the C-130E crew overheard radio transmissions indicating the BAC-111 carrying retired Major General Alan Stretton was unexpectedly in Mount Isa.

Given the importance of getting the operational commander to the disaster site, Squadron Leader Fewster diverted to Mount Isa and picked up Stretton.

The C-130E crew then flew to a darkened Darwin where none of the runway lights or navigation aids were working. The aircraft was guided to the runway using an airborne radar approach.

On the morning of December 26, Group Captain Hitchins and his Army and Navy peers in Headquarters Operational Command intended to evacuate all ADF personnel.

Major General Stretton, of the Natural Disasters Organisation, made sure supplies and skilled labour

made it in to Darwin, at the same time moving citizens out so emergency workers could restore essential services. In total, more than 30,000 residents were evacuated. Of these, 18,853 were accommodated by Army in Queensland, NSW, South Australia and Western Australia.

At the time of the cyclone, Army had 160 personnel in six units in Darwin and assisted with refugee evacuations, provision of personnel, medical assistance, assistance to police, aerial mapping, constructed Bailey bridges, and conducted clearance and restoration.

With personnel being recalled from Christmas leave, one of Australia's biggest humanitarian assistance/disaster relief operations was under way.

Elements of 2 Field Engineering Regiment delivered pumping and purification equipment to Darwin, accompanied by plumbers, refrigerator mechanics, electricians, plant operators, mechanics and fitters.

With personnel being recalled from Christmas leave, one of Australia's biggest humanitarian assistance/disaster relief operations was under way.

Disaster relief flights to and from Darwin continued sporadically until mid-February, with the last RAAF C-130 mission occurring on February 15, 1975.

These flights were supplemented by support from Royal New Zealand Air Force, Royal Air Force and Indonesian C-130s.

Those who took part in the Cyclone Tracy operations took away long lasting memories of the devastation, the intensity of the operation (including the extreme fatigue they experienced) and the community response.

Then Defence Minister Mr Barnard expressed his thanks on behalf of the Australian Government.

"All the armed services have played their part in the emergency," he said.

"I wish to express my personal thanks to all."



An area of RAAF Base Darwin devastated by Cyclone Tracy.

Photo: RAAF Museum

Submarine Institute of Australia Conference

Chief of Navy address—Introduction extract

05 Nov 2024

Good morning, Michael, Scottie. Thank you for the invitation and the opportunity to speak here today. To Their Excellencies, High Commissioner for the United Kingdom, Vicki Treadell, and Her Excellency the Ambassador for the United States to Australia, Caroline Kennedy. Thank you for being here at this very, very important event.

Other distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen, and of course, most importantly, the submariners in the room, it is fantastic to share this event with you.

I'd like to begin by acknowledging the Ngannawal people on whose traditional lands we meet today, and I pay my respects to their elders, past, present and emerging.

I'd also like to acknowledge the more than 20 ships of the Royal Australian Navy and more than 1,600 sailors and officers who are underway in their great service to our nation this week while we are gathered here to discuss this very important issue.

Introduction – A Tradition of Excellence in Spite of Doubt

By way of introduction, I'd like to talk about the tradition of excellence in spite of doubt, and it is an honour to address you on a topic that is frankly fundamental to our shared future as citizens of a three-ocean island trading nation.

Australia's submarines are the cornerstone of our deterrence strategy. But deterrence against what? Against an appetite to interfere with our maritime economy—I submit, an economy which is reliant upon access to the sea, to shipping lanes and to seabed cables.

Some of us grew up being told that this nation rode to economic success on the sheep's back. I disagree with that. Frankly, as far as I know, sheep don't swim, very far. I submit that this nation sailed to economic prosperity on the ship's deck, and we forgot it at our peril. Iron ore doesn't float.

The fuel imports which enable our economy and power the ADF's ability to fly, sail and drive, come via the maritime industry. We maintain our economic prosperity by maintaining access to the seas and access to the seas in our time is no longer guaranteed.

Indeed freedom of the seas isn't free, and for an island trading nation, this is not a discretionary issue.

But let me start by observing that despite our nation being entirely surrounded by sea with a comparatively modest population, Australia's submarine programs—from the E class in 1914 to today's initiatives under AUKUS—have constantly faced criticism for their cost and complexity. It is an abiding trend.

Our nation's first submarines, the E class, were criticised as costly and risky undertakings, as Australia's military submarine capability and the Royal

Australian Navy itself were both still in their infancy.

What was lost was that we had access to, and we were operating the most advanced long range conventional submarine of its day, in the very earliest years of our Navy.

By the 1960s, with the acquisition of the Oberon-class, we saw a significant capability leap. Yet, the O boats were criticised for their considerable maintenance and upgrade costs, drawing criticism for being an unsustainable strain on resources. Regardless, to this day they are regarded as one of, if not the most, capable conventional submarines of their era.

In the 1990s the debate resurfaced as we pursued the Collins-class. Concerns over technical complexity and our capacity to build them sparked significant public discourse. Indeed, I remember the headline, *Dud Subs*, by Ian McPhedran in the weekend paper, being published at the same time as one of our Collins-class submarines, the first to participate in exercise RIMPAC, was finding, fixing and holding at risk Los Angeles-class submarines. It was indeed the quietest submarine of its type in that exercise. But you wouldn't have known it from reading the media.

Again, the Collins-class are regarded as world-class all diesel boats who continue to conduct a variety of successful operations for our nation. And would it be possible that I could stand here with my peers from the Submarine Force from all three nations and share with you the operational successes of the Royal Australian Navy? If I could, I think you would indeed be very, very proud. We would all go to jail, however.

The recurring factor has been a tendency by some commentators to lament the relative cost of ownership of submarines versus ships. It always struck me as odd though that it wasn't intuitive to grasp that an underwater aerospace vehicle would cost more to own and operate than a floating vessel, or that the utility was not only complementary, but it was force multiplying.

However, in each instance, in spite of the doubt, Australian submarine programs ultimately succeeded through the grit and determination of astute decision makers and the dedication and professionalism of Navy people and our industry and academic partners.

This story of excellence reflects an enduring pattern of overcoming doubt to achieve extraordinary national capability outcomes. It is truly a story of Australian excellence, persevering and achieving great things in spite of pessimism, cynicism and competing agendas. And the missions consistently achieved by professionals focused on one thing, we derive our national economic security, and therefore our national security, from access to the maritime domain.

Multi ship Commissioning Ceremony



On Thursday 12 December 2024, four Evolved Cape Class Patrol Boats (eCCPB) were commissioned in a single ceremony at their home port of HMAS Coonawarra, Darwin, Northern Territory. HMAS Ships Cape Pillar, Cape Naturaliste, Cape Woolamai and Cape Capricorn had been operating as Australian Defence Vessels (ADV) and will now operate as His Majesty's Australian Ships (HMAS) after their intended service life was extended.

ADV Cape Otway

Photo: Defence

years. The four ships will continue to play a major role in Navy's contribution to the nation's fisheries protection, immigration, customs and drug law enforcement operations

The Evolved Cape Class Patrol Boats had been planned as an interim leased capability until the Offshore Patrol Vessels (OPVs) entered service. However, their utility in meeting the Royal Australia Navy's operational requirements has meant they will now be in service for 20

The Ships Companies of HMA Ships Cape Pillar and Cape Capricorn "cheer ship" during the multi-ship commissioning ceremony held at HMAS Coonawarra in Darwin, Northern Territory.

Photo:

ABIS Connore Morrison



Current pensions and allowances

SERVICE PENSION	Old rate (fortnightly)	New rate (fortnightly)	Increase (fortnightly)
Single person	\$1,116.30	\$1,144.40	\$28.10
Couples (each)	\$841.40	\$ 862.60	\$21.20
Single person – transitional	\$922.90	\$941.10	\$18.20
Couples (each) – transitional	\$744.60	\$759.30	\$14.70
WAR WIDOWS (total amount)			
War widow(er)'s pension	\$1,136.30	\$1,165.30	\$29.00
Income support supplement (ceiling rate)	\$337.40	\$346.20	\$8.80
DISABILITY Compensation Payment			
T&PI (Special rate)	\$1,760.00	\$1,805.30	\$45.30
Intermediate rate	\$1,166.80	\$1,196.80	\$30.00
EDA	\$949.80	\$974.20	\$24.40
100 per cent (inc ES)	\$611.00	\$626.70	\$15.70
10 per cent (inc ES)	\$68.03	\$69.60	\$1.57
VETERAN PAYMENT			
Single person	\$1,211.20	\$1,242.20	\$31.00
Couples (each)	\$944.50	\$968.70	\$24.20
MRCA			
Wholly dependent partner payment	\$1,136.30	\$1,165.30	\$29.00
Special Rate Disability pension (SRDP)	\$1,760.00	\$1,805.30	\$45.30

These are the maximum rates of payment and include any Energy Supplement payable. These rates came into effect on 20 September and the first full payment was the payday of 17 October 2024. An explanation of these changes is available in the online version of *Vetaffairs*.

Scam alert



Criminals are calling people and pretending to be from a trusted organisation like a bank, IT company or phone company. They will say your bank accounts or computers aren't secure and your money isn't safe. They will ask for your PIN and tell you to leave your bank card in your letterbox so it can be cancelled and replaced. They may ask you to withdraw cash and leave that in the letterbox instead, or they may pick it up from you directly.

These scammers can use technology to make it look like the call is coming from the bank's or other legitimate business's phone number. They may send text messages in the same conversation thread as your real bank.

Our Scamwatch reports show these criminals are targeting older and vulnerable Australians who live alone. They are stealing large sums of money. Share this Scam Alert with your friends, family and colleagues - it's important we all work together to help protect each other from scams.

How to spot the scam

Criminals pretend to be from your bank, IT company or phone company and tell you that your account or computer is not secure. They will ask you to provide your PIN and leave your card out for collection, or to withdraw cash and hand this over instead.

How the scam works

Scammers impersonate organisations you know and trust so that you will believe what they're saying.

They will try to make you scared about the security of your money or device, so you'll do what they say without stopping to check that what they're saying is real.

Once they have your card and PIN, they'll withdraw as much money from your account as possible.

What you should know

Your bank or phone company will never ask you to:

- disclose your PIN
- leave your card out to be collected
- withdraw cash from your account
- transfer money to another account to keep it secure.

Speak up and report if you are ever asked to do any of these things. Visit the Scamwatch website to find out more.

Stay protected

STOP – Never tell anyone your PIN, or give your

card or cash to someone you don't know. Say no, hang up, delete.

CHECK – Scammers call and pretend to be from organisations that you know and trust – like your bank. If you're not sure, call the official number of the organisation to check. You can find this on their website, app or the back of your bank card.

PROTECT – If a scammer has taken your money, bank card or personal details, contact your bank or card provider immediately to report the scam and ask them to stop any transactions. Call the police if your cash or card has been taken by someone you don't know. Report scams to Scamwatch.

If you've been affected

If you're the victim of a scam, don't be embarrassed. It can happen to anybody. It's important to ask for help and report the scam as soon as you can.

If a scammer has taken your money, bank card or personal details, contact your bank or card provider immediately to report the scam and ask them to stop any transactions. Call the police if your cash or card has been taken by someone you don't know, or you feel unsafe.

When you report the scam, the people who read your report understand how you are feeling. You are not alone. Contacting support services can help you understand what happened and ensure you get access to the support you need.

Help others by reporting scams to Scamwatch. The information you provide helps the National Anti-Scam Centre make Australia a harder target for scammers.

Resources for people experiencing financial hardship

The National Debt Helpline: 1800 007 007

Who is the National Anti-Scam Centre?

The National Anti-Scam Centre is where government and industry work together to protect Australians. We're harnessing shared resources and smarter analytics to identify blind spots, strengthen weak links and use data to react faster, stopping scams before they happen.

Our aim is to make Australia a harder target for scammers.

HMAS *Canberra* exercises Freedom of Entry—4 December 2024



More than 250 officers and sailors from HMAS *Canberra* III exercised their freedom of entry – a mark of trust and respect, and the highest accolade a town can award a military unit.

Commanding Officer *Canberra*, Captain Brendan O'Hara said such activities strengthened bonds between Defence and the Australian people.

"It is such an honour for us to march through the streets of our namesake city and is an opportunity to express our appreciation for the Australian community," Captain O'Hara said.

"It also provides a chance to build familiarity, trust and confidence with our local communities.

Members from the HMAS *Canberra*/HMAS *Shropshire* Association also participated in the event, including 101-year-old Stoker Desmond Jones, the last survivor of HMAS *Canberra*.

Mr Jones was on board during the Battle of Savo Island on 9 August 1942, when the ship was



Above photos by LSIS Jarrod Mulvihill

struck by two torpedoes on its starboard side and more than 20 salvos of 8-inch shellfire.

The vessel sank with the loss of 84 lives.

Mr Jones met several crew members of *Canberra* III, including Seaman Tamara Buckley from Sydney. (See photo above)

At 19, Seaman Buckley is the youngest member of the crew and the same age as Mr Jones when he was forced to abandon ship in 1942. The two sailors exchanged stories, separated by more than 80 years,

By Mike Hughes

Left: CO HMAS *Canberra* Captain Brendan O'Hara presents a gift to the Australian War Memorial – a print featuring USS *Canberra*, his own ship and its predecessors.

Photo by Petty Officer Tara Morrison.





Merle Hare (née Storrie), ACT Section-Honorary Member for Life celebrates her 105 th birthday with her mates, members of the Navy Women's Association and the Naval Association ACT Section at the Ainslie Football Club on 19 January 2025' She celebrated it with her family the next day.

Merle joined the WRANS on 25 March 1943 WR940 and served until 9 January 1946 being discharged as a POSV .



Below: Merle is seated in the middle of the front row with a bunch of flowers.

Photos: sent by Pauline Gribble and Debbie McGown



Bereavement support

In the event of the death of a current serving Royal Australian Navy (RAN) member, Defence will offer the assistance of a Bereavement Support Team to the next of kin. The [Defence Member and Family Helpline](#) (1800 624 608, available 24/7) should be contacted by families seeking support in these circumstances.

In the event of the death of an ex-serving RAN veteran, there is support available to families through different areas within [Defence](#).

Australian White Ensign

RAN veterans may wish to have the [Australian White Ensign](#) (AWE) used as coffin pall at their funeral, or at a memorial service held for them.

Families are required to seek formal approval from the RAN by either applying directly to Navy Bereavements (navy.bereavement@defence.gov.au), or by having their funeral company apply on their behalf. Please ensure the full name, date of birth, date of death and Service number (if known) of the RAN veteran is provided as part of the request.

Generally, Funeral Directors will have an AWE available to use for this purpose. If not, Navy Bereavements will seek to have an AWE loaned to the funeral company. Please note, the AWE is not permitted to be kept by the family, following the funeral or memorial service.

Committal of Ashes to the Sea

RAN veterans may wish to have their ashes scattered at sea. This is known as Committal of Ashes to the Sea (COATS).

Families can request COATS through Defence Member and Family Support Headquarters by emailing a completed application form (and any supporting documentation) to defencefamilyhelpline@defence.gov.au. Please ensure the full name, date of birth and service number (if known) of the RAN veteran is provided as part of the request.

[Request for Committal of Ashes form \(PDF 79.86 KB\)](#)

Royal Australian Navy Bereavement Pin

Families of deceased Royal Australian Navy veterans may wish to apply for a Royal Australian Navy (RAN) Bereavement Pin.

The RAN Bereavement Pin was commissioned by the Chief of Navy to recognise the valued contribution of all RAN personnel who served and provide their families with a special keepsake in remembrance of this service. RAN Bereavement Pins are available to immediate family members of deceased RAN veterans, including widows/widowers, parents, siblings, children and grandchildren. Extensions to this eligibility can be considered for compassionate and compelling circumstances.

RAN Bereavement Pins can be requested by emailing a completed application form (and any supporting documentation) to navy.bereavement@defence.gov.au. Please ensure the RAN veteran's full name, date of birth, date of death and service number (if known) is provided as part of the request.

[Navy Bereavement Pin application form \(PDF 189.74 KB\)](#)

Processing of nomination forms may take up to 5-6 weeks and Bereavement Pins will be sent through the post. Responsibility cannot be accepted by Navy Bereavement for misdirected applications or lost/misdirected mail.

Any queries regarding additional medal entitlements of a RAN veteran who has died, should be directed to [Defence Honours and Awards](#).

Statement of Service

Defence holds personal information about Australian Defence Force (ADF) members to assist in the support of the members and their families, both during and after their service. Personal information about RAN veterans, such as a Statement of Service, can be accessed via the [personal information request](#) process.

Contact

Navy Bereavement

navy.bereavement@defence.gov.au

Defence Member and Family Helpline

defencefamilyhelpline@defence.gov.au
1800 624 608



Have your say: Defence and Veteran Mental Health and Wellbeing Strategy

28 January 2025

Whether you have or know someone who has served in the Australian Defence Force (ADF), all Australians are encouraged to have their say on the Defence and Veteran Mental Health and Wellbeing Strategy Exposure Draft. The veteran community were consulted in late 2023, and now the Australian public are invited to share their thoughts.

Any and all Australians can participate, including veterans, current serving ADF members, and families plus organisations that have an interest or role in supporting the Defence and veteran community.

Feedback will help inform what is important when it comes to supporting the mental health and wellbeing of our Defence and veteran community.

The Exposure Draft is available to download [here](#).

<https://www.dva.gov.au/news/latest-stories/have-your-say-defence-and-veteran-mental-health-and-wellbeing-strategy->

Feedback may be provided by:

- answering specific questions in the [exposure draft survey](#)
- entering or uploading a written submission in the [submission portal](#).

Your feedback will inform the finalisation of the Strategy. Consultation on the Exposure Draft is now open and will close at **5:00 pm Friday 7 March 2025**.

The Defence and Veteran Mental Health and Wellbeing Strategy is jointly developed by DVA and Defence to guide how the government provides support to current and former serving ADF members. The strategy is set to be finalised later this year.

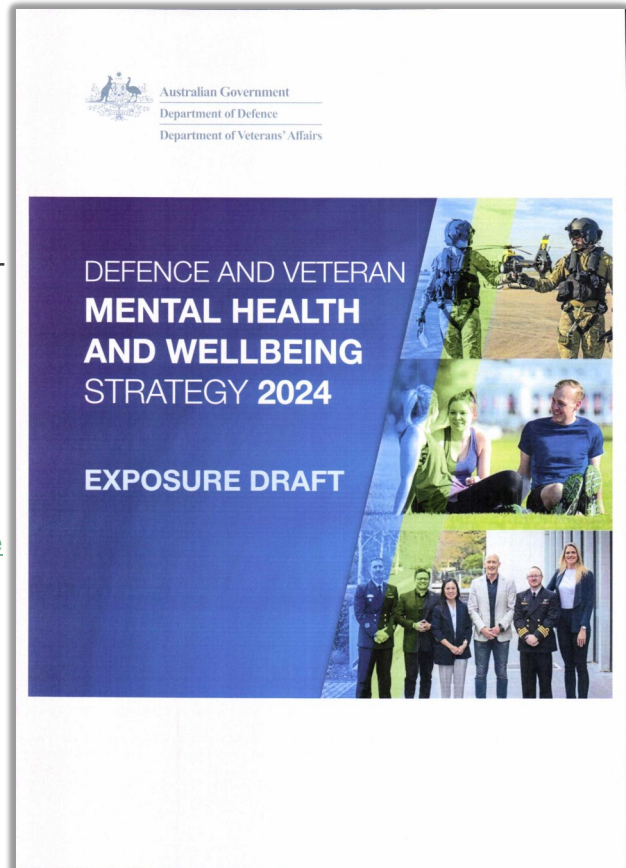
For more information visit the [Defence and Veteran Mental Health and Wellbeing Strategy webpage](#).

Information and conversations about mental health and suicide might be distressing to some people.

In the case of an emergency call 000.

If you need support:

- Open Arms - Veterans and Families Counselling provides free and confidential counselling to anyone who has served at least one day in the ADF and their families via a 24-hours helpline 1800 011 046
- All-hours Support Line, a confidential telephone service for ADF members and their families is available 24 hours a day, seven days a week 1800 628 036
- Defence Member and Family Support Helpline 1800 624 608
- 13YARN (national crisis support line for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people) 13 92 76
- Griefline (support for experiencing loss and grief) 1300 845 745
- QLife (LGBTI peer support and referral for people wanting to talk about sexuality, identity, gender, bodies, feelings or relationships) 1800 184 527
- Lifeline Australia (crisis support) 13 11 14
- Suicide Call Back 1300 659 467
- Kids Help Line (phone counselling service) 1800 551 800



DVA Contacts

DVA Contacts

Provider enquiry 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

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 & 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

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 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.

Claims Processing

As at 31 December 2024, DVA had 81,650 claims on hand, comprised of 5,561 unallocated claims and 76,089 claims being processed.

In the financial year to date (FYTD) (1 July 2024 to 31 December 2024):

- DVA received 49,275 claims
- DVA made 48,515 determinations
- the average time taken to process MRCA Initial Liability (IL) claims was 296 days, a decrease of 94 days (or 24.1%), compared to the previous FYTD.

By comparison, for MRCA IL claims received from 1 December 2023 and determined by 31 December 2024, the average time taken to process was 101 days, a decrease of 195 days (or 65.9%), compared to all MRCA IL claims determined this FYTD.

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