



National Bosun's Call



Vol 6 No 3

Once Navy, Always Navy

April 2024

Selected to be Chief of Defence Force

Vice Admiral David Johnston was born in 1962 and entered the Royal Australian Naval College as a junior entry Cadet Midshipman in 1978. He graduated from the College in 1982 as a seaman officer, later specialising as a Principal Warfare Officer. He was appointed Vice Chief of the Defence Force on 7 July 2018.

His operational naval tours include serving as Commanding Officer of HMAS Adelaide (FFG 01) and HMAS Newcastle (FFG 06). In these commands he conducted border security patrols and deployed on Operation QUICKSTEP to Fiji in 2006.

His staff appointments include Command and Control specialist staff positions in Australian Defence Headquarters, Operations Manager at Sailors' Career Management and later as Director Joint Plans in Strategic Operations Division, where he developed strategic military response options for consideration by Government.

In July 2007 on promotion to Commodore, he joined Fleet Headquarters as Commodore Flotillas where he was responsible for planning maritime operations and the operational training of Navy's ships, submarines and diving teams.

In November 2008 he assumed the role of J3 (Director General Operations) at Headquarters Joint Operations Command. This role encompassed the operational level execution of all Australian Defence Force operations both overseas and within Australia.

In October 2010, he deployed to Operation Slipper in the Middle East Area of Operations as the Deputy Commander Joint Task Force 633. He supported the Commander JTF in providing national command oversight of all Australian Defence Force elements conducting maritime, land and air operations in Iraq, Afghanistan and adjacent maritime areas. He was awarded a Commendation for Dis-



tinguished Service for this role.

Promoted to Rear Admiral he assumed the role of Deputy Chief Joint Operations Command in June 2011. While performing this role he commanded the Defence Joint Task Force that supported the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting in 2011 and the visit by the President of the United States of America later in that year.

Vice Admiral David Johnston was appointed Commander Border Protection Command in December 2011 and held this responsibility until December 2013. As commander of this multi-agency organisation he was responsible for the civil maritime security of Australia's maritime domain using resources from both the Australian Defence Force and the then

Australian Customs and Border Protection Service.

On promotion to Vice Admiral in April 2014, he was appointed Chief of Joint Operations in May 2014. As CJOPS his role was to plan, control and command ADF military campaigns, operations, joint exercises and other activities in order to meet Australia's national objectives.

In July 2018, Vice Admiral David Johnston was appointed Vice Chief of the Defence Force.

Vice Admiral David Johnston holds a Master of Science in Operations Research from the USN Postgraduate School in Monterey, California and a Master of Arts in Strategic Studies from Deakin University. He participated in the inaugural Australian Security Executive Development Program in 2009. In 2012 he was appointed a Member of the Order of Australia (Military Division) and in 2018 was appointed an Officer of the Order of Australia (Military Division). In 2022 he was appointed a Companion of the Order of Australia (Military Division). He is married and has 2 children.



Nuclear Test Medal

The British Prime Minister announced on 21 November 2022 that a medal has been approved to honour the significant contribution of veterans and civilian staff from across the Commonwealth, who participated in Britain's nuclear testing programme.

The medal recognises the contribution made by veterans and civilians from across Australia, New Zealand, Fiji and Kiribati. All service personnel and civilians under UK command, including close partners from the Commonwealth and Pacific region, who participated in, or were present at, the British or American nuclear tests at the Montebello Islands, Christmas Island, Malden Island and Maralinga & Emu Field, South Australia between 1952 and 1967 will be eligible for the medal. This also includes scientists and local employees..

It is estimated that around 22,000 veterans will be eligible for medallic recognition.

The medal can be awarded posthumously. Veterans, their families and next of kin will need to apply for the medal, which will be free of charge. It was expected that the first awards of the medals would be made in 2023.

The award comes as the country pays tribute to the veterans of the United Kingdom's nuclear test programme at the National Memorial Arboretum in Staffordshire this morning.

The ceremony, which took place 70 years after the first British test of a nuclear weapon, will be attended by the Prime Minister, the Defence Secretary and Veterans' Affairs Minister Johnny Mercer

At the ceremony the British Prime Minister Rishi Sunak said:

'I am incredibly proud that we are able to mark the service and dedication of our nuclear test veterans with this new medal. Their commitment and service

has preserved peace for the past 70 years, and it is only right their contribution to our safety, freedom and way of life is appropriately recognised with this honour.

This medal is an enduring symbol of our country's gratitude to each and every person who played a part in this effort and their loved ones who supported them.

The veterans and civilians who participated in the United Kingdom's nuclear test programme, the first of which was known as Op Hurricane, made the UK the third nuclear power. This work contributed to achieving the nuclear deterrent - the ultimate guarantee of UK sovereignty which continues to keep us safe today, and helps guarantee international security.'



For detailed eligibility requirements, visit

www.gov.uk/government/publications/nuclear-test-medal-eligibility-criteria

The website also provides a link to the medal application form (MODMO 0001). The application form is relatively easy to complete on a computer. However, it must be printed, signed, and sent by post to the Ministry of Defence Medals Office; email submissions are not accepted.

The mailing address is provided on the form. An official from the Ministry of Defence Medals Office noted that they have a record of Australian service members who served at the nuclear test sites, which may expedite the approval process.

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National Patron His Excellency General The Honourable
David Hurley AC DSC Retd Governor General of Australia

Boost to veteran pensions

20 March 2024

From this month, eligible veterans and families are set to receive an increase in financial support when pension payments rise.

Some pension recipients including veterans, their partners, war widows and widowers across Australia will see an increase to their pension payments from 20 March 2024, in line with the pension indexation process.

You don't have to do anything to receive the payment increase, it will be automatically be applied to payments received after 20 March 2024.

Pensions are indexed four times a year on 1 January, 20 March, 1 July and 20 September.

For more information including a summary of pension rates, limits and allowances please visit the [DVA Payment Rates page](#). The table below highlights the new fortnightly rates:

Pensions and allowances rise

SERVICE PENSION	Old rate (fortnightly)	New rate (fortnightly)	Increase (fortnightly)
Single person	\$1,096.70	\$1,116.30	\$19.60
Couples (each)	\$826.70	\$841.40	\$14.70
Single person - transitional	\$906.80	\$922.90	\$16.10
Couples (each) - transitional	\$731.60	\$744.60	\$13.00
WAR WIDOWS			
War widow(er)'s pension	\$1,116.30	\$1,136.30	\$20.00
Income support supplement	\$331.40	\$337.40	\$6.00
DISABILITY Compensation Payment			
Special rate (T&PI)	\$1,729.20	\$1,760.00	\$30.80
Intermediate rate	\$1,146.40	\$1,166.80	\$20.40
Extreme Disablement Adjustment (EDA)	\$933.20	\$949.80	\$16.60
100 per cent	\$600.30	\$611.00	\$10.70
10 per cent	\$66.96	\$68.03	\$1.07
VETERAN PAYMENT			
Single Person	\$1,189.70	\$1,211.20	\$21.50
Couples (each)	\$927.60	\$944.50	\$16.90
MRCA			
Wholly dependent partner payment	\$1,116.30	\$1,136.30	\$20.00
Special Rate Disability pension (SRDP)	\$1,729.20	\$1,760.00	\$30.80

These are the maximum rates of payment and include any Energy Supplement payable. These changes came into effect on 20 March and the first full payment at the new rates will be the payday 17 April 2024.

An explanation of these changes is available in the online version of *Vetaffairs*.

ACT Section's National Activities



On the 18 March 2024 the Governor General of Australia opened his residence in Yarralumla Canberra to the public. Those organisations to whom he is a patron were invited to have a stall set up in the grounds of Government House. The ACT Section of the NAA set up a stall and combined with the WRANS and Naval Women's Association, ACT Branch. National President David Manolas manned the booth and is visible in the shade inside the booth

Photo: Geoff Hazell



Left and Below: Last Post Ceremony at the Australian War Memorial in Canberra remembering the loss of HMAS Perth I on 28 February 1942. The wreath for the ship and Leading Seaman Alan Hawke was laid by the AC Section Vice President Alex McGown

Photos: Flickr





Royal Commission into Defence and Veteran Suicide

25 March 2024

The Chief of the Defence Force, General Angus Campbell, will take the stand as the Royal Commission into Defence and Veteran Suicide enters its final week of public hearings in Sydney.

The hearing will continue to examine the issues of leadership and accountability with a focus on how the upper echelons of the Australian Defence Force and Department of Defence have responded to a suicide crisis in the military community.

General Campbell previously gave evidence to the Royal Commission in Townsville in June 2022, where he said the ADF "is not doing enough" to address Defence and veteran suicide.

Chair of the Royal Commission Nick Kaldas said it would be an opportunity to ask the General about the cultural and systemic challenges the inquiry had identified within Defence.

The Chiefs of Army, Navy and Air Force have previously given evidence at the Sydney hearing.

Commissioner Kaldas said it was refreshing to hear

"Nearly two years ago, General Campbell admitted Defence was not doing enough to address this national tragedy," Commissioner Kaldas said. "We're keen to hear what urgent steps Defence has taken in the intervening period to improve health and wellbeing outcomes for its people," Mr Kaldas said.

the tri-service chiefs acknowledge suicide and suicidality as a service issue –and speak openly about improvements needed within Defence.

"It was particularly good to hear the Chiefs of Air Force and Navy acknowledge there is a link between what happens during service and the adverse outcomes some experience after they leave the military. This is something Defence has not previously acknowledged, believing that this was a problem mainly for those who have left service and therefore for the Department of Veterans' Affairs."

General Campbell will appear on Thursday 28 March.

The Secretary of the Department of Defence Greg Moriarty will appear on Tuesday 26 March, while Associate Secretary Matt Yannopoulos will appear today (Monday 25 March).

The 16-day public hearing will conclude on Thursday.

The Royal Commission is due to deliver its final report to the Governor-General by 9 September this year.

Newsletter

Edition 27 - 4 March 2024

"There's no time to waste": Commission Chair says leaders must act now on veteran wellbeing

The chair of the Royal Commission into Defence and Veteran Suicide has opened the inquiry's final public hearing in Sydney today, saying the cultural and systemic issues impacting veterans' health and wellbeing must be urgently addressed.

In his opening statement, Commissioner Nick Kaldas once again urged leaders to see this Royal Commission as an opportunity to drive long-overdue cultural and systemic reforms. He stressed there must be collaboration, cooperation, governance and accountability from all parties.

Despite at least 57 related inquiries preceding this Royal Commission, there has been no improvement in the high rates of suicide and suicidality among the Defence and veteran population.

Mr Kaldas has told the hearing there's "no time to waste" in tackling the issues impacting the health and wellbeing of serving and ex-serving ADF members, and their families.

No longer can these systemic issues be denied, dismissed, diminished or deflected by those in the halls of power and positions of leadership. Their lack of ownership of these issues, their lack of curiosity about contributing issues, and their willingness to accept glossy versions of history over stark facts cannot continue.

- Commissioner Kaldas

Legal support

The Defence & Veterans Legal Service (DAVLS) provides information and legal advice to support Australian Defence Force personnel and veterans, as well as their families, carers and supporters, to safely share their experiences with the Royal Commission. This service is independent – both from the Royal Commission, and from Government, including Defence and DVA. Visit the [DAVLS website](#) or call 1800 331 800 to find out more.

Australian Defence Force chief Angus Campbell issues unreserved apology for 'deficiencies' in supporting veterans at royal commission

ABC News 28 March 2024

The chief of the Australian Defence Force has issued an unreserved apology for "deficiencies" in providing wellbeing support and care for veterans during and after their service and says he is committed to "doing better".

General Angus Campbell is appearing before the long-running Royal Commission into Defence and Veteran Suicide, which is in its final week of public hearings.

He began his evidence with an opening statement which acknowledged failings.

"Our people deserve and should rightly expect the wellbeing support and care they need both during and after their service," General Campbell said.

"I acknowledge that this has not always been the case and has tragically led to the deaths by suicide of some of our people.

"I apologise unreservedly for these deficiencies.

"Defence is committed and I am committed to doing better."

General Campbell said the courage of those who have come forward to share experiences with the commission was "deeply admirable".

He said he appreciated the efforts of those who have contributed to his learning and the force's "deeper understanding" of suicide and its "enduring aftermath".

Under questioning from Counsel Assisting, Erin Longbottom KC, he also acknowledged he was accountable for "everything that happens in the defence force and everything that does not happen in the defence force".

General Campbell previously appeared before the royal commission in June 2022, where he admitted defence was not doing enough to address veteran suicide.

Defence needs 'culture of organisational accountability'

Ms Longbottom put to General Campbell that the royal commission was not the first inquiry to explore issues connected to mental health and sui-



cide prevention within the defence community.

He accepted there were some 22 reports and inquiries that have examined the issue over 16 years.

But he disagreed that Defence waited until 2022 or 2023 to start "in earnest" initiatives to improve the experience of personnel.

Ms Longbottom asked why the newly established mental health and wellbeing branch could not have been set up before last year.

General Campbell said Defence was previously coming from a "disaggregated perspective".

"What we have been doing, certainly through my tenure, is trying to systematically build the aggregated capacity to act as an enterprise and to generate consistently high quality outcomes by an enterprise view," he said.

General Campbell also accepted that suicide and suicidality is a "significant adverse event" that Defence must confront.

He agreed with Ms Longbottom's propositions that it requires more than a "procedural response" and there is a need for a "culture of organisational accountability".

On his way into the hearing, General Campbell told the media the royal commission was "critically important".

"Defence is determined to learn from and to improve our support to our people," he said.

Photo: NCA NewsWire

Submariner's accomplishments commended

22 February 2024

Two years since completing an exchange posting aboard a US Navy nuclear-powered submarine, an Australian submariner received the United States Navy (USN) and Marine Corps Commendation Medal for his service while in the UK.

Commander Daniel McCall is serving as an exchange officer within the UK's Submarine Delivery Agency and received his commendation during AUKUS Pillar 1 meetings held in London in December 2023.

Rear Admiral Lincoln Reifsteck, USN, presented the medal on behalf of the US Secretary of Navy Carlos Del Toro, recognising Commander McCall's accomplishments during a 2021 deployment aboard the Los Angeles-class fast-attack submarine USS *Key West* (SSN 722) as an exchange officer.

The citation accompanying the medal reads in part, "Commander McCall contributed to the successful accomplishments of two missions vital to the national security of the United States," and that, "through his continuous effort, he strengthened the ties between the US Navy and the Royal Australian Navy Submarine Forces".

Commander McCall's presentation ceremony was held in King Henry VIII's Wine Cellar – an historical feature built in 1536 that is now preserved underneath the UK's Ministry of Defence main building, Whitehall.

Fellow senior leaders Rear Admiral Matt Buckley, RAN Head Nuclear Submarine Capability in the Australian Submarine Agency, and Rear Admiral Chris Shepherd, RN, joined Rear Admiral Reifsteck in congratulating Commander McCall on his distinguished feat.

"Commander McCall's achievement demon-

strates the professionalism of RAN and USN submariners and our long history of working closely together on operations," Rear Admiral Buckley said.

"The efforts of Commander McCall and the professional and personal relationships he has developed will be well utilised as we now embark on an even deeper relationship through the AUKUS nuclear submarine program."

Commander McCall said the presence of senior leaders from the three partner nations highlighted the importance of the ceremony and AUKUS Pillar 1's mission to deliver a sovereign conventionally armed, nuclear-powered submarine capability to Australia.

"I truly appreciate the time under way with my USN shipmates and I am grateful to receive such an award," Commander McCall said.

"Opportunities such as these are highly beneficial for both parties, which will be further realised as more RAN submariners serve in Virginia-class submarines under AUKUS.

"I was also fortunate to have former commanders of mine at the ceremony – Commodore Brad Francis [RAN] and Captain Doug Theobald [RAN] – who are both fulfilling essential AUKUS positions in the US and UK respectively."

Defence

Commander Daniel McCall, Royal Australian Navy, being presented with the citation that accompanies the US Navy and Marine Corps Commendation Medal.

Photo: Defence



Family support

Defence understands the impacts the military way of life has on ADF members and families. Defence Member and Family Support (DMFS) offers various support programs to help balance the demands of service life with the needs of families. [ADF Members and Families](#) page provides information about the support available for partner employment, school mentoring, special needs care and financial advice.

Health

ADF Family Health Program

The National ADF Family Health Program commenced on 1 January 2014 to assist Defence families with the cost of basic health services. Navy Health Ltd is currently contracted by Defence to perform all ADF Family Health claims processing.

Recognised dependants of permanent ADF members and dependants of Reservists on Continuous Full Time Service (CFTS) are eligible register for the program. Benefits are available for a variety of health services from allied health, general practitioner, specialist (outpatient), and diagnostic and radiology services.

Navy alcohol and other drugs services

Navy Alcohol and Other Drugs Services (NAODS) is a peer-support program that provides education, counselling and support for serving members wishing to address problematic gambling, tobacco, alcohol, and other drug use.

Contacts

Email: naods.correspondence@defence.gov.au
Officer in Charge & Alcohol and other drugs counsellor: 0438 217 463

Alcohol and other drugs counsellor: 0408 518 240

Western Australia: 0438 647 849

Eastern Australia: (02) 9537 0404

Financial support

[Family financial advice](#) page provides information on various financial resources and services available to Defence members and their families.

The [Royal Australian Navy Relief Trust Fund \(RANRTF\)](#) provides welfare assistance to serving and ex-serving members of Royal Australian Navy and their families. It provides a range of financial products and services that are reviewed periodically to ensure they remain consistent with the RANRTF vision, mission and values. It also helps to ensure that these products and services continue to meet the needs of members. Further information can be found on the intranet and [Keeping Watch](#) website.

Pastoral care and spiritual support

Pastoral care and spiritual support is provided by Navy Chaplaincy to all Navy members and their families. Navy Chaplaincy are committed to creating a safe, supportive and caring environment, and

welcome all who seek pastoral care, religious or spiritual support.

Email: nsc.dgchapn@defence.gov.au

Regional crisis support (24 hours)

Regions	Mobile
Australian Capital Territory	0420 996 367
New South Wales (Shoalhaven)	0421 687 817
New South Wales (Sydney)	0411 203 618
Queensland (Brisbane)	
South Australia	
Tasmania	
Northern Territory	0409 662 823
Queensland (Cairns)	0407 798 472
Victoria	0417 494 803
Western Australia	0407 212 967

Defence members and their families have access to 24/7 chaplaincy services, they can call [the helpline](#) to speak to the on-call Chaplain in the area.



Defence Family Matters magazine

Defence Family Matters (DFM) is a lifestyle magazine for Australian Defence Force (ADF) members and their families.

Articles celebrate family stories from the Defence community and provide advice on managing relocation, deployment and family member absences.

Can you recognise suspicious provider behaviour

Service providers and other third-party organisations play an important role in offering high quality health and wellbeing programs and services for veterans and families.

To help protect veterans and families, all service providers must comply with strict requirements for the services they deliver to DVA clients. Most providers do the right thing. However, we are aware of some providers and third-party organisations which are engaging in misleading and non-compliant behaviours, including fraud.

A small number of DVA providers and third-parties engage in misleading and non-compliant conduct and this can adversely affect the veteran community and DVA. Such conduct includes:

- target veterans through misleading advertising and prize draws
- send or offer DVA clients unsolicited 'free' goods related to their Veteran Card entitlements
- contact DVA clients via uninvited, direct approach methods (cold calling/emails)
- contact DVA clients claiming to represent DVA or be making contact on behalf of DVA
- use images of Veteran Cards and government logos on webpages and other materials to suggest DVA or the Australian Government endorses their services
- provide DVA clients with allied health services without a valid referral from their GP.

DVA is the only source of truth for information about the services and supports that can be accessed by veterans and families using a Veteran Card. You can learn more about [Veteran Card entitlements](#) and [DVA's funded health services](#) on the DVA website. Alternatively, you can call us on [1800 VETERAN \(1800 838 372\)](tel:1800838372) to confirm what services you are entitled to receive.

Defence Family Matters magazine

DFM is published in July and December each year. By default, a hard copy is posted to all fulltime personnel who have dependents and have a street address recorded in the HR system.

Subscription and postage

Those who do not receive DFM by default (i.e. part-time reservists, family members and friends) can subscribe via Defence website

Members can also use the form to modify their default subscription details. This includes changing delivery from hard copy to digital, unsubscribing or requesting delivery to a PO Box.

There are ways you can protect yourself from being a victim of fraud. These include by:

- knowing the facts – read the small print
- asking questions if you can't find answers in the small print
- checking the information that you've read or heard is correct
- not sharing your personal information over the phone or online with people or providers you don't know
- asking an advocate or trusted friend or family member to help you
- Visiting www.dva.gov.au or calling us on [1800 VETERAN 1800 838 372](tel:1800838372) if you need more information.

Remember, if something sounds too good to be true, it probably is. Look into it closely before you accept the offer.

If you suspect fraud

DVA takes a zero tolerance approach to fraud committed against DVA or our clients. Tip-offs help to keep our veteran community safe. If you suspect someone isn't following the rules, report it to us by:

- **emailing:** fraud.tipoff@dva.gov.au
- **completing the online [Report a Fraud form](#):** dva.gov.au/about-us/dva-forms/report-fraud
- **contacting us by phone:** [1800 VETERAN \(1800 838 372\)](tel:1800838372)

Suspicious Provider Behaviour

DVA takes all fraud and non-compliance tip-offs seriously and investigates these as appropriate. You can choose to remain anonymous when reporting an issue that you think might be fraud. However, please be aware this can make it more difficult to investigate the issue if we require further information.

For more information, including what DVA needs to investigate a fraud complaint, please visit the [Reporting suspected fraud page](#) of the DVA website (dva.gov.au/about/overview/reporting-suspected-fraud).

It is normal for you and your family to feel distressed if you think you have been a victim of fraud. If you need support, Open Arms – Veterans & Families Counselling offers counselling and support services for veterans and families 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

Contact Open Arms by visiting www.openarms.gov.au or by phoning 1800 011 046.

Memories—Naval Birdies' family life in the 1960's

While all of this was going on in the higher echelons life at NAS Nowra continued, albeit with some insecurity. Pam Da Costa recalls her experiences as a new bride of 'joining the Navy':

I arrived in Nowra as a new bride at the beginning of 1960. Nowra was largely a dairying community at that time with only the paper mill (APPM) and the Horlicks (malted milk) factory in the area and several timber mills. As I recall, only the Princes Highway (Kinghorn Street) and the main shopping streets, Junction Street and part of Berry Street, were paved. All the other streets were gravel with no curb and guttering. The township virtually ended on the southern side at the Kalander Street/Albatross Road intersection. The bridge over the Shoalhaven River had two lanes and was paved with planks which were very noisy, and as the town expanded in the North Nowra/Bomaderry area, the two-lane bridge was a continual bottleneck, particularly at holiday times. Nowra was the centre of the south coast holiday area and when I arrived, every available house, shanty and shack was rented out to holiday-makers and it was impossible to find anywhere to live. Moreover, the locals thought that we were responsible for the increased rents and prices in the shops and there was a definite 'them and us' mentality in operation around the town.

We had been married over a Christmas leave period four days after the ship had returned from a 'short cruise' to New Zealand. (There was only one ship to the boys in the Fleet Air Arm in those days and that was HMAS *Melbourne*.) However, one of the fellows on the squadron who had married during the previous year had managed to rent a house in town and they invited us to camp on the floor at their place. We only had to wait for six weeks until a flat became vacant in the main street, Kinghorn Street (the Princes Highway).

This was much more convenient than living in a converted garage or way down at Huskisson, as some of our friends had decided to do. We thought the Mayfair Flats were heaven. A place of our own. A fibro box divided into four smaller boxes with no insulation or sound proofing—we could hear every sneeze, every cough, every argument—the lot. But it was only temporary because we had been allowed to put our name on the Married Quarters List and we had been assured there

HMAS Albatross in the late 1950's

Perth Drive is located in the Married Patch to the left of the newer buildings at the top right corner of the photo

would only be a fifteen-month wait until our name came to the top of the list. Married quarters were on the base, five miles out of town and surrounded by farms—a lovely rural setting if you could ignore the noise of the aircraft.

So the day came when we were given the news. We had been allocated 44 Perth Drive. Now we had all the excitement of packing everything up again, arranging a truck to move us, and having the privilege of paying for it ourselves as well!!

As it has turned out over the years, that is the best move we ever made. I had been working in the town so hadn't had the opportunity to make many friends apart from my husband's immediate circle. Our families lived in Sydney and Adelaide so there was little family support, which was particularly hard at times. But the friendships forged with the other families with whom we lived in those years in MQ are as strong today as they were back then. Because most of us were living away from our families, we relied heavily on one another for support and became a sort of extended family.

When the ship was 'working up' and they would be at sea during the week and home on weekends, it often became difficult to switch roles from being 'the boss', to being 'the little woman'. Especially when they brought all their dirty washing home as well and somehow, amid tending to all the other chores, we had to wash (and STARCH) the uniforms, iron them till they were firm but not too stiff, fold them exactly in the correct creases and make sure all the bits and pieces were in the right places. We would also try and cook creative meals, since we were told the ship's cooking wasn't up to much, have the children off to bed at a reasonable hour (HA!) so we could spend a

(Continued on page 11)



Memories—Naval Birdies' family life in the 1960's

(Continued from page 10)

nice quiet evening together and give the appearance of having everything 'under control' on the home front. Of course, it rarely worked. I must say there were times when the ship finally left for Singapore/Hong Kong/Japan/the Philippines or wherever, that I breathed a huge sigh of relief because it meant I could run my own routine and not have to worry about whether my boss/housewife switch was 'On' or 'Off'.

Those of us who were so 'widowed' developed a routine in Perth Drive of having dinner at one another's houses on Saturday nights. We never had enough money to go out, and in any case we were five miles (8 km) out in the bush, and there were only two eating places—the RSL or Leong's Chinese Cafe. So we would take the kids to the beach or out in the bush somewhere all day so they would be exhausted and go to bed early. We then got 'dressed up', which meant high-heeled shoes and stockings and makeup, and we got to talk to 'grown-ups' all night. Every quarter-hour or so one or other mother would do the rounds of the houses to make sure all the kids were OK, and the spaghetti bolognese or stew became the highlight of the week. We didn't have a lot of sympathy when we got letters from our husbands complaining of yet another cocktail party or being detailed off to attend some boring diplomatic party in whatever exotic port they happened to be in. After all, they had cut into our already meagre housekeeping allowance so that they could have money to spend while they were away, which meant our

opportunities for entertainment were even further curtailed.

The attitude of the Naval hierarchy in those days seemed to be that families were a bit of a pest and a nuisance. We were not allowed to use the Mess while our husbands were away, or attend Mess functions. The implication was that, either we would be so irresponsible as to run up a huge Mess bill, or we would run off with one of the men.

The only time I ever got a letter from a ship's captain acknowledging the fact that my husband was married (and therefore had commitments and a contract outside the Navy) was to remind me that flying was a dangerous business and that he didn't need to know about my problems on the home front, so don't write to him at sea about difficulties he couldn't solve. What surprises me now, in retrospect, is that we accepted such treatment, although we did become extremely vocal when one of our wives was told to leave MQs with her children while her husband was serving in Vietnam, because their two and a half years was up!!

Flying Stations –A story of Australian Naval Aviation

Copyright Australian Naval Aviation Museum
Printed `1998

Pam Da Costa verbally approved the copying of her comments

Ghost Shark

14 April 2024

Ghost Shark Program is Mission Zero for the Advanced Strategic Capabilities Accelerator (ASCA). Minister for Defence Industry, The Hon Pat Conroy MP announced the Government will deliver a sovereign, autonomous undersea capability, through the Ghost Shark Program and confirmed the Ghost Shark Program is Mission Zero for the Advanced Strategic Capabilities Accelerator (ASCA).

Only Defence's highest priorities are selected to become ASCA missions and there must be an identified pathway for the innovation to transition to capability.

Ghost Shark 'Alpha' is the first of three prototypes being co-developed by the Defence Science and Technology Group, the Royal Australian Navy and Anduril Australia.

Ghost Shark will provide the Royal Australian Navy with a stealthy, long-range autonomous undersea warfare capability that can conduct persistent intelligence, surveillance, reconnaissance

The Government is spending more than \$10 billion on autonomous and uncrewed systems, including armed systems, as part of a comprehensive plan to provide the ADF with capabilities it needs to meet strategic circumstances .

Photo : Defence



HMAS Coonawarra—Galley gets a facelift

11 APRIL 2024

HMAS *Coonawarra* recently embarked on a voyage of transformation – an initiative aimed at optimising key areas, notably the galley and junior sailors' and other ranks' (JSOR) mess.

With the support of funding through Navy Logistics and Navy Support Force HQ, the JSOR's mess received a \$2.1 million 'refresh' in record time, with a dual focus on operational efficacy and wellbeing.

Commanding Officer *Coonawarra* Captain David Shirvington said it was a large and necessary undertaking.

"Following an electrical fire in 2022 at the other ranks' mess, significant work was required in *Coonawarra* to quickly identify a space that met the dining and recreational needs of our sailors," Captain Shirvington said.

"Consequently, the Larrakeyah senior sailors' and sergeants' mess became the JSOR, however, was also not in a fit state and did not meet the contemporary needs of our workforce.

"Dating back to 1940, the building holds historical significance and is included on the Australian Commonwealth Heritage List, so any refurbishment had to be carried out within the guidelines laid out in that document.

"The eventual refurbishment not only rejuvenated the building, but also safeguarded its heritage sta-

tus, ensuring its continued preservation for future generations. The modernisation is aligned with Navy's Stay On Board – People First retention initiative, championed by the Chief of Navy and Navy senior leadership."

One area to benefit from the refurbishment was the galley – serving as the central space where culinary expertise converges with logistical precision, it plays an indispensable role in the morale and welfare of personnel.

Like any operational area, galleys deteriorate with age, becoming dilapidated and inefficient in layout.

"The aim of the refresh was to modernise equipment and infrastructure, thereby meeting the evolving culinary demands of our personnel," Captain Shirvington said.

"However, this upgrade extends beyond the mere acquisition of new equipment and fittings – it's about creating a more ergonomic and effective workspace for our chefs."

Attention was also paid to JSOR mess social areas, where the base's junior members gather to relax, socialise and recharge.

Tired carpeting was replaced with new flooring, enhancing visual appeal and ease of cleaning and maintenance. Alongside new paint and furnishings,

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HMAS Coonawarra—Larrakeyah development

(Continued from page 12)

comfortable seating and versatile spaces, the mess now offers a modern environment for members.

The addition of a refurbished outdoor sitting area and an upstairs bar provide additional areas for socialising.

“The transformation is remarkable. Once uninspiring spaces are now vibrant areas, which is a testament to our commitment to our people’s wellbeing and morale,” Captain Shirvington said.

By Leading Seaman Angus Koch

Since commissioning on 16 March 1970, HMAS Coonawarra has expanded rapidly. It relocated from its original site at Berrimah to Larrakeyah in December 2003. The Larrakeyah Defence Precinct, comprising HMAS Coonawarra and supporting Resident Units, is located near the mouth of the Beagle Gulf, Darwin’s harbour.

Darwin is a vitally important Navy port - a gateway to Australia’s northern neighbours and the centre from which border integrity operations are conducted. The city plays host to major exercises and operations involving around 100 visiting Australian and foreign major warships each year.

In mid 2021 work commenced to boost Defence’s fuel storage and refuelling capabilities at Larrakeyah Barracks near the Darwin Central Business District

following the awarding of a \$26m contract which included two 1.75 megalitre diesel fuel tanks, the tank farm pump facility, piping, and fire, water, electrical, and safety services. This will enhance the Australian Defence Force’s capacity to undertake operations in the north of Australia and provide fuel storage and refuelling capabilities to meet the growing demand, which includes the basing of six of the 12 forthcoming Arafura Class Offshore Patrol Vessels in Darwin.

Currently, almost 700 Navy personnel are based in the area where they are focussed on supporting fleet operations.

Below: Larrakeyah Defence Precinct, and HMAS Coonawarra’s harbour



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
- Internet relay users connect to the [NRS](#) then ask for 1800 838 372

Claim Processing

Where things are at

In the month of February 2024 we:

- Made 9,184 decisions on claims
- received claims from 7,282 veterans

As at 31 January 2024 we:

- were working on 73,700 claims
- had 1,188 active claims not yet allocated to an officer for processing (known as the claims backlog),

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(1800838372))

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.

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