

Official Newsletter of the Navy Victoria Network

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Editorial

The Royal Australian Navy at the Battle of Leyte Gulf October 1944

During my 36-year career in the Royal Australian Navy (RAN) Band, I participated in countless memorial and commemoration services. Events like the Battles of the Coral Sea, Sunda Strait, Battle of Australia, and Sydney–Emden are well-known history, commemorated faithfully every year. Yet, it surprises me that I cannot remember hearing about the largest naval battle of World War II: the Battle of Leyte Gulf.

This significant piece of the RAN's history took place between 23 and 26 October 1944. Fought in the waters of the Philippines, it involved over 200,000 personnel and nearly 300 Allied ships. Australia's crucial contribution to this massive effort included HMAS *Australia*, *Shropshire*, *Arunta*, *Warramunga*, *Manoora*, *Westralia*, *Kanimbla*, *Gascoyne*, *Bishopdale*, *Merkur*, *Poyang*, *Yunnan*, and *HDML 1074*.

Some 82 years on, I thought it appropriate that we recall this significant event and reflect on the contribution the RAN made throughout this time. The following article was published by the RAN Seapower Centre. I hope you enjoy reading about The Battle of Leyte Gulf.

The liberation of the Philippines offered important strategic implications. If the Japanese lost their hold in the Philippines, their Empire would be cut in two, and maintaining the flow of oil to the home islands would become even more difficult. The Allies would also gain another staging base for subsequent assaults on islands closer to Japan.

The retaking of the Philippines began with an assault on the Leyte Gulf–Surigao Strait area. Planning was complicated by the huge distances involved. While the Normandy landings on 6 June 1944 took place 50 nautical miles across the English Channel, Leyte Gulf

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Events Calendar

(see Calendar for full details)

NOTE:

For information on all Shrine ceremonies:
Phone: 03 9661 8100 or,
Email: ceremonies@shrine.org.au

***11-Nov** - 10:30 - Victorian State Remembrance Day Ceremony - Shrine - WWII forecourt*

***13-Nov** - 14:00 Royal Australian Navy Wind Band "Last Night of the Proms" - West Gippsland Arts Centre, 1 Civic Place Warragul*

***15-Nov** - 11:00 - HMAS Goorangai Commemorative Service - Queenscliff*

***19-Nov** - 11:00 - HMAS Sydney Commemorative Service Shrine - Sanctuary*

***23-Nov** - 1900 - Naval Historical Society Christmas celebratory dinner - Clayton RSL - Sovereign bistro*

was more than 500 nautical miles from the main staging areas in Morotai and Palau. Much of the logistic support had to come from the US west coast, more than 5000 nautical miles from the front. The assault would also take place beyond the range of land-based aircraft, so all air support would need to come from US Navy aircraft carriers. The advance from Morotai to Leyte in one bound was a calculated risk, as the Allied forces would be ringed by Japanese airfields and land-based aircraft with greater staying power than the aircraft from USN aircraft carriers.[1]

Commanded by Vice Admiral Kinkaid, USN, the US Seventh Fleet and assigned elements of the US Third Fleet together formed Task Force 77 and the Central Philippines Attack Force, and comprised 157 combat ships (including 6 battleships, 11 cruisers and 18 escort carriers), 420 amphibious ships and 84 patrol, minesweeping and hydrographic vessels. Another 17 aircraft carriers, 6 battleships, 16 cruisers and 56 destroyers of the Third Fleet, under Admiral Halsey, USN, had the task of covering the invasion.

The Royal Australian Navy's contribution to Kinkaid's force, under the command of Commodore Collins, consisted of the heavy cruisers HMA Ships *Australia* and *Shropshire*; the destroyers *Arunta* and *Warramunga*; the infantry landing ships *Westralia*, *Kanimbla* and *Manoora*; the frigate *Gascoyne*; and the motor launch *HDML 1074*. The RAN was also represented in Task Group 77.7, the Leyte Gulf Service Force of the Seventh Fleet, by the oiler *Bishopdale*, the provision ship *Merkur* and the ammunition ships *Poyang* and *Yunnan*.



HMAS Arunta (I) as viewed from HMAS Shropshire, 27 September 1944. Both ships participated in the Battle of Surigao Strait the following month.

***01-Dec** - 11:00 - HMAS Armidale Commemorative Service - Shrine - Sanctuary*

***07-Dec** - 14:00 - Pearl Harbour Remembrance Service - Shrine - Sanctuary*

***09-Dec** - 1400 & 1900 Soundwaves Concert - HMAS Cerberus - Band & Cinema complex*

***12-Dec** - 11:00 - Armed Merchant Cruiser/LSI Service - Shrine - Sanctuary*

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Latest Videos and News Headlines

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VIDEOS …...

- *Success beyond service – Veteran Employment Program*
- *Ongoing commitments to service – Veteran Employment Program*
- *New horizons, new opportunities – Veteran Employment Program*
- *National commemoration for 25th anniversary of Australian service in Afghanistan 2001-2021 (2026)*
- *25th anniversary of Australian service in Afghanistan 2001-2021 - pre-service short film (2026)*
- *Exercise Longreach 2025 in Tuvalu: Together, Ready*
- *Northern Territory Cooking Competition*

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NEWS *shorts…...*

U.S. Navy leaders joined industry partners, members of the Jackson County Economic Development Foundation, Inc., and representatives from the Australian Embassy to break ground on a new facility in Pascagoula, Miss. that will manufacture critical

Every shell, spare part, and all fuel and food required for this vast armada had to be carried in ships from either the US west coast or Australia. Fuel and lubricants were sourced from the USA and the West Indies. Ammunition arrived from the USA via Australia. A third of all fresh produce came from the USA, the rest from Australia. This required a massive fleet train to carry the necessary supplies. Task Group 30.8 of the Third Fleet, which augmented the Seventh Fleet support force, comprised 34 oilers, 11 escort carriers, 19 destroyers and 26 destroyer escorts. Additional lift capacity, and an escort force, was required for supplies necessary to project and sustain the land operations.

On 10 October, the assigned forces sailed from their assembly areas at Hollandia, Manus Island, Morotai and Guam. 'No one', wrote Captain Tarbuck, USN, the Senior Naval Adviser at MacArthur's headquarters, 'could see this great panorama of ships without realising the impotence of any great army engaged in oceanic warfare without control of the sea and air'.[2] The fleet arrived on 17 October and began bombarding Japanese shore positions and sweeping defensive minefields. On 18 October, *Gascoyne* and the American minesweeper *YMS 393* entered San Pedro Bay and laid channel markers and shoal water buoys.

On the morning of 20 October, Task Group 78.3, which included *Westralia*, *Kanimbla* and *Manoora*, entered Leyte Gulf and commenced landing operations at Panaon Island. Within 45 minutes, the three Australian ships had disembarked over 2800 troops of the US 21st Regimental Combat Team on the undefended island. The main landings at Tacloban and Dulag were accompanied by a full bombardment from battleships, cruisers, destroyers and rocket ships, including *Australia*, *Shropshire*, *Arunta* and *Warramunga*. By that afternoon, the situation was secure enough for MacArthur to wade ashore and make his famous 'I have returned' broadcast. Shore based opposition to the landings was light and Japanese aircraft made only sporadic attacks during the day.

On the following morning, the two Australian cruisers were attacked by a lone Japanese dive-bomber, which crashed into the port side of *Australia*, killing 30 crew and wounding 64, many of them skilled and experienced bridge and gunnery control personnel. The Commanding Officer, Captain Dechaineux, was killed and Commodore Collins was wounded.[3] *Australia* was the first Allied vessel at Leyte hit by a suicide aircraft; although this was not part of the organised kamikaze attacks on the Allied forces, which began four days later, but the act of an individual pilot.[4] As a

components for in-service and new-construction submarines.

It was an explosive end to the ADF's largest overseas training activity for 2026 with the first international deployment and firing of the high mobility artillery rocket system (HIMARS).

As Australia seeks to rebuild much of its aged naval fleet, it should also look to rebuild how it perceives itself in the Indo-Pacific. Australia is and has always been a regional maritime power, even if its capability has at times not kept pace with that statement.

Australia's economic prosperity depends on the sea. As a three-ocean island trading nation with the world's third-largest exclusive economic zone, the country relies on open and secure maritime trade routes. Maritime Trade Operations (MTO) officer LCDR Robert Graham said Australia has a responsibility to help keep those sea lanes open.

Following the historic signing of the Papua New Guinea-Australia Mutual Defence Treaty, known as the Pukpuk Treaty on 6 October 2025, today we announce that from next month eligible Papua New Guineans will be able to apply to join the Australian Defence Force (ADF).

Defence is protecting marine life from potential construction impacts near HMAS Stirling in Western Australia. Relocating seahorses and pipefish to specially designed 'seahorse hotels' placed close to Stirling helps safeguard the vulnerable marine species.

"Naval history is no longer peripheral. In a world increasingly shaped by maritime concerns; trade routes, resource competition, strategic rivalry, and environmental

consequence of the casualties and damage, *Australia*, escorted by *Warramunga*, sailed for Manus Island. These were the only Australian casualties of the operation.



The forward 8-inch turrets of HMAS Australia (II) searching for the enemy, 14 September 1944. The heavy cruiser's Commanding Officer, Captain E. F. V. Dechaineux DSC, RAN is on the bridge. Dechaineux was killed on 21 October 1944 during the Battle of Leyte Gulf. Image: AWM 017623

The Imperial Japanese Navy activated its Operation Sho-1 defence plan upon sighting the Allied assault forces on 17 October. The Japanese planned to attack on 25 October to allow for the time required to fuel the ships and embark aircraft. The Japanese naval forces, organised into Northern, Centre and Southern Forces, sailed on 22 October to intercept the Allied invasion force. The Japanese mustered one fleet aircraft carrier, 3 light aircraft carriers, 6 battleships, 2 hybrid battleship-carriers, 13 heavy cruisers, 6 light cruisers, and 31 destroyers. The Northern Force aircraft carriers was to attempt to distract and divert the American fast aircraft carrier group while the two Japanese battleship groups entered Leyte Gulf and attacked the invasion shipping. On paper this was a formidable force, however, there were a number of major weaknesses, primarily the lack of trained aircrews.

The battle for Leyte Gulf on 24–25 October 1944 comprised three major naval engagements. At the Battle of Surigao Strait, the Japanese Southern Force's night attack on the landing forces was repulsed by Admiral Kinkaid's covering forces, including *Shropshire* and *Arunta*. Two Japanese battleships and three destroyers were sunk without loss to the Allied force, and a damaged heavy cruiser succumbed to air attack the following day.

change, the sea has re-emerged as a central arena of human activity." This is the message that Professor Craig Stockings of the University of New South Wales (UNSW) will deliver in his keynote speech at the upcoming Chief of Navy's History Conference.

China built more than twice the naval tonnage of the United States in the 2024-25 period, narrowing the gap between the two countries' navies, according to the World Defense Shipbuilding report published by Euronaval ahead of the 2026 edition of the naval defense show.

Australia, the United Kingdom and the United States are staging their largest ever demonstration of interoperable maritime autonomous systems, as part of the AUKUS Pillar 2 Maritime Big Play initiative. Defence personnel, government officials and key stakeholders are gathering this month to see first-hand the uncrewed and autonomous equipment being developed and deployed by the three AUKUS nations.

HMAS Sydney has returned to Australia following 131 days operating across the Indo-Pacific demonstrating Australia's commitment to regional security, strengthening partnerships with key allies and partners, and enhancing Navy's warfighting proficiency. The successful regional presence deployment concluded with the ship's company being reunited with family and friends upon their return to Fleet Base East earlier today.

Thousands of Indonesian and Australian sailors, soldiers and aviators are now proudly wearing a military patch featuring a garuda and kangaroo, reflecting the integration of forces during Exercise Keris Woomera.

At the Battle of Cape Engano, the Northern Force lost four aircraft carriers, a light cruiser and four destroyers, before the remaining force withdrew. At the Battle off Samar Island, the Japanese Centre Force attacked the US Navy Escort Carrier Force, which was left exposed by Halsey's departure. This enemy force of powerful fast battleships and cruisers sank an escort carrier and two destroyers, but lost three heavy cruisers in return and withdrew without attacking the landing forces in Leyte Gulf. The failure of the Centre Force to press home its attack on the landing forces meant that the Japanese Northern Force aircraft carriers had been sacrificed in vain.

The Battle of Leyte Gulf cost the Imperial Japanese Navy heavily, effectively destroying it as an offensive force. [5] The potential naval threat to this and future Allied invasions had disappeared, which also greatly reduced the Allies' need to provide extensive protection to their logistics forces. The Japanese had failed to achieve their objectives while the Allies would ultimately achieve theirs. Several important lessons can be drawn from the Leyte Gulf operation.

A key principle of war is the selection and maintenance of the aim of an operation. The aim of Sho-1 was to disrupt the landings by attacking the transport shipping in Leyte Gulf. The Centre Force became distracted by its attack on the Escort Carrier Group, instead of carrying through the attack on the transport shipping. At the same time, the Allied force also failed to clearly select its aim. Halsey believed his primary role was destroying the Japanese fleet, while MacArthur believed Halsey's primary role was protecting the landings. This should have been clarified by higher command prior to the operation. Kinkaid's covering force was almost out of ammunition after the previous day's bombardments and the Surigao Strait night action. Had the Centre Force pressed home its attack the landing force could have suffered serious losses and the invasion might have been placed in jeopardy.

Another key principle of war is sustainment. As Leyte Gulf demonstrated, the difficulty of sustaining maritime power projection operations over extended distances should not be underestimated. The logistics effort was enormous, with extended and potentially vulnerable supply lines stretching over 5000 nautical miles. Of particular note is the substantial additional effort required to protect the ships of the logistic force, removing escort vessels and aircraft from offensive operations.

A third key principle of war is cooperation. Units of the RAN provided essential capabilities that complemented those of the US

HMAS Sydney rendezvoused with HMAS Choules in the Arafura Sea on October 4, spending time operating together before continuing their separate deployments. Sydney was on her way back to Australia after more than four months at sea as part of a regional presence deployment across the Indo-Pacific.

A new frontier of underwater warfare is providing RAN with an unparalleled advantage over any adversary. The development and advancement of new, autonomous deployable mine countermeasures are enhancing Australia's capability to keep safe the shipping lanes and commercial ports vital for Australia's economy and the daily lives of all Australians.

Exercise Dugong commenced off the east coast of NSW this month, bringing together three navies to strengthen their combined mine warfare, clearance diving and seabed warfare capabilities. The Australian-led exercise develops the skills, tactics and techniques required to identify and neutralise underwater threats, helping keep vital shipping lanes and commercial ports safe and open.

The Australian Government is honouring the service, leadership and contribution of women who have served our country through the launch of the first Women Veterans' Strategy, continuing practical actions to support and recognise their service.

HMAS Sydney recently rendezvoused with HMNZ Ships Aotearoa and Te Mana in the South China Sea, replenishing fuel and stores before continuing her regional presence deployment through the Indo-Pacific region. Having sailed together to Hawaii in June for Exercise Rim of the Pacific, Sydney

Navy at Leyte Gulf. Capabilities such as the infantry landing ships, logistics ships and survey ships were what might now be termed 'niche' capabilities. The RAN's ability to operate in Allied coalitions and alliances, from 1901 to the current day, has been predicated on cooperation, in terms of shared or substantially similar doctrine, equipment and control arrangements.

The landings and naval battles at Leyte Gulf in October 1944 demonstrated the utility of maritime forces in power projection operations. Amphibious ships moved troops 500 nautical miles to landing beaches. Logistics ships moved vital stores, ammunition and rations, directly and indirectly, over 5000 nautical miles to maintain land and naval forces in the area of operations. Sea-based air power provided essential air cover to the fleet and land forces in an operation beyond the range of Allied land-based aircraft. In all but the latter, the RAN made a small, but substantial, contribution to the successful outcome of the operation.

References

[1] Royal Navy, *Naval Staff History Second World War: War with Japan, Volume VI: The Advance to Japan*, British Admiralty, 1959.
[2] GH Gill, *Royal Australian Navy, 1942-45*, Australian War Memorial, Canberra, 1968, p. 501.
[3] The current RAN submarines HMAS *Collins* and HMAS *Dechaineux* commemorate these officers.
[4] Gill, *Royal Australian Navy, 1942-45*, p. 511. Gill notes that instances of suicide attacks by damaged aircraft had been observed since 1942. The first organised kamikaze attacks occurred on 25 October 1944 in the attack on the US escort carriers *Santee* and *Suwannee*.
[5] Sunk: Battleships *Musashi*, *Fuso*, *Yamashiro*; fleet aircraft carrier *Zuikaku*; light aircraft carriers *Zuiho*, *Chitose*, *Chiyoda*; heavy Cruisers *Nachi*, *Atago*, *Maya*, *Chikuma*, *Chokai*, *Suzuya*, *Mogami*; light Cruisers *Tama*, *Noshiro*, *Abukuma*; Destroyers *Nowake*, *Hatsutsuki*, *Akitsuki*, *Yamagumo*, *Michishio*, *Asagumo*, *Hayashimo*, *Fusinnami*, *Shiranuhi*. Damaged: Battleships *Yamato*, *Ise*, *Hyuga*; heavy Cruisers *Kumano*, *Takao*, *Myoko*; light Cruiser *Yahagi*; Destroyer *Kiyoshima*.

Yours Aye!
NVN Team

was back in company with her New Zealand counterparts to conduct a replenishment.

The Australian and New Zealand navies share a bond more than 100 years old. For SBLT Esther Blain, that bond is lived every day. A Royal New Zealand Navy engineering officer, she is currently serving on board HMAS Stuart while deployed on a regional presence deployment as part of an exchange program.

As robots rolled through sandy terrain, negotiating barbed wire, trenches and simulated landmines, it looked less like a robotics competition and more like a glimpse into a futuristic battlefield. The challenging course, built by 13 Bde's 13 Engineer Regiment for Exercise Western Dawn 2026, was designed to replicate the complex and hazardous terrain of Australia's vast littoral environment.

HMAS Sydney recently arrived in Bali for a port visit after travelling about 22,000 nautical miles during the ship's regional presence deployment. Commander of Denpasar Naval Base Kolonel Laut (P) Ary Mahayasa and staff officially welcomed Sydney and her crew on their arrival at the Port of Benoa.

"Senang bertugas dengan anda [Happy to work with you']!" That was the rousing message as senior Australian and Indonesian military leaders gathered at the opening ceremony for Exercise Keris Woomera, the ADF's largest overseas training exercise this year.

When people think about Australia's contribution to the Afghanistan campaign, they often picture soldiers on the ground or pilots in the air. Less visible, but equally important, was the work being done at sea by RAN personnel. For former HMAS Newcastle air warfare

OUR OCTOBER HERO



Admiral Sir George Francis HYDE, KCB CVO CBE MiD

After early years in the merchant service and as a Royal Naval Reservist, George Francis Hyde entered the Royal Navy as a Lieutenant. After transferring to the Royal Australian Navy, Hyde rose to become the first member of the PNF to fly his flag afloat in command of the Australian Squadron, the first member of the PNF to command a ship of the Royal Navy, the first and only RAN Flag Officer to fly his flag afloat in command of a Royal Navy Squadron, the only RAN Officer to be created KCB, the first member of the PNF to achieve the rank of full Admiral on the active list, and the first seagoing flag officer of the RAN to become professional head of his service.

Continue reading about this outstanding officer.....

VALE

If you know of any of our Navy family who has crossed the bar and doesn't appear on our list below or Memorial Wall on our website, please don't hesitate to contact the webmaster at: *navyvictoria@gmail.com*. If possible, list their Rank, Name, Number, the date of their passing and their age. Thank you.

† CPOMTH R.W. Habel, R43489, 29 October 2026. Aged 74.
† LEUT A.G. Powell, A36167, 25 October 2026. Aged 96.
† LEUT A. Mroz, 25 October 2026.
† CPOMTP H.J. Foeken, R54662, 24 October 2026. Aged 87.
† WONP G.T. Cairns, R65061, 22 October 2026. Aged 78.
† CPORS R.J. Thompson, R93457, 19 October 2026. Aged 81.
† LCDR J. Beatty, October 2026. Aged 45.
† CPOQMG K.B. Hoey, R63780, 16 October 2026. Aged 80.
† CPOMTP D.C. Berry, R42474, 14 October 2026. Aged 82.
† LEUT J.E. Selsmark, A50143, 14 October 2026. Aged 90.
† SURG CDRE M. Flynn, 13 October 2026. Aged 79.
† LCDR R. Norton-Baker, 09 October 2026.
† WOMTP4SM R.D. Wilson, R55742, 03 October 2026. Aged 89.
† CPOB K. Mackenzie, 02 October 2026.
† CPOPTI R.S.N. Flaherty, R/38675, 02 October 2026. Aged 95.
† POB D.A. Clack, R137428, 01 October 2026.
† ABCK A.E. Williams, R53236, 01 October 2026. Aged 86.
† WR Coder R.L. Bull, WR/1927, 01 October 2026. Aged 100.
† LEUT M. Cerlenizza, 29 September 2026.
† POEWE K.G. Jaffers, R58062, 29 September 2026. Aged 81.
† CEC C.F.L. Jamieson, R94044, 27 September 2026. Aged 79.
† CPOMTP J.L. Morris, R42556, 11 September 2026. Aged 80.

All of the above names now appear on the special Memorial Wall of our website.

Lest We Forget

and force protection officer, CMDR Alisha Withers, the deployment highlighted the complex and integrated nature of modern military operations.

For years, CPO Paul Berry followed Australian soldiers into Afghanistan's most dangerous regions. His first deployment came in the aftermath of the September 11 attacks, when, still in his early 20s, he served as an able seaman boatswain's mate on HMAS Sydney during Operation Slipper in the Middle East.

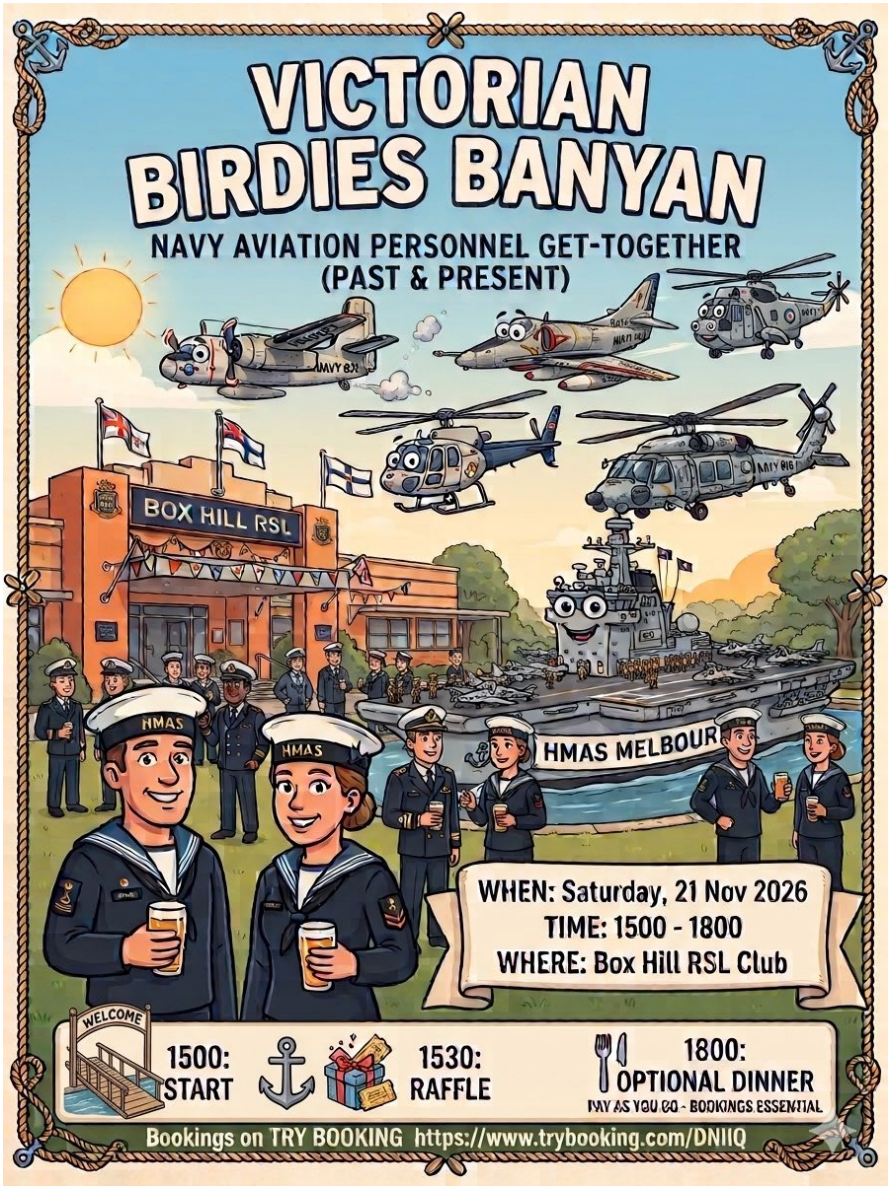
For some members of HMAS Perth, a port visit to Subic Bay in the Philippines was more than just another stop during their regional presence deployment – it was a chance to go home and to reconnect with family, revisit places from their childhood and experience the Philippines for the first time.

Navy cadets from across the country enjoyed an action-packed week at HMAS Cerberus for the annual Australian Navy Cadets (ANC) National Camp. From joy rides on rigid-hulled inflatable boats to mud runs through the Cerberus mangroves and jumping in on the action of survival at sea training, more than 160 cadets were immersed in maritime activities.

Current or former Australian Defence Force (ADF) personnel can now apply to have historical homosexual convictions extinguished from their service records. Up until 1992, consensual homosexual activities could be prosecuted as service offences under Australian military discipline law.

Australia joined Pacific partners to strengthen maritime security and protect vital fisheries resources during Operation Nasse, conducted





across the Pacific region in September.

Two Navy ships have rendezvoused in the South China Sea before continuing their regional presence deployments across the Indo-Pacific. HMAS Sydney and HMAS Stuart conducted training together in international waters, including anti-submarine warfare exercises, aviation operations, boarding party training, cross-deck professional exchanges and ship-handling manoeuvres.

The new Veteran Mental Health Incentive is supporting general practitioners (GPs) and psychiatrists to spend more time with veterans and provide ongoing, coordinated mental health care.

"As we step back and hand full primary responsibility for Iraq's security to the Government of Iraq and the brave people of Iraq, US and Coalition forces stationed across the region will remain ready to respond to any ISIS threats that arise," CENTCOM Commander Adm. Brad Cooper said.

The potency of two of the Royal Navy's newest ship-busting missiles was confirmed in landmark firings with United States allies against a specially prepared ex-US Navy warship in the North Atlantic.

At least two Royal Australian Navy Arafura Class offshore patrol vessels will be homeported at HMAS Cairns, strengthening defence industry and regional security in Northern Australia. The first, HMAS Arafura, is scheduled to be homeported in Cairns in early 2027.

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