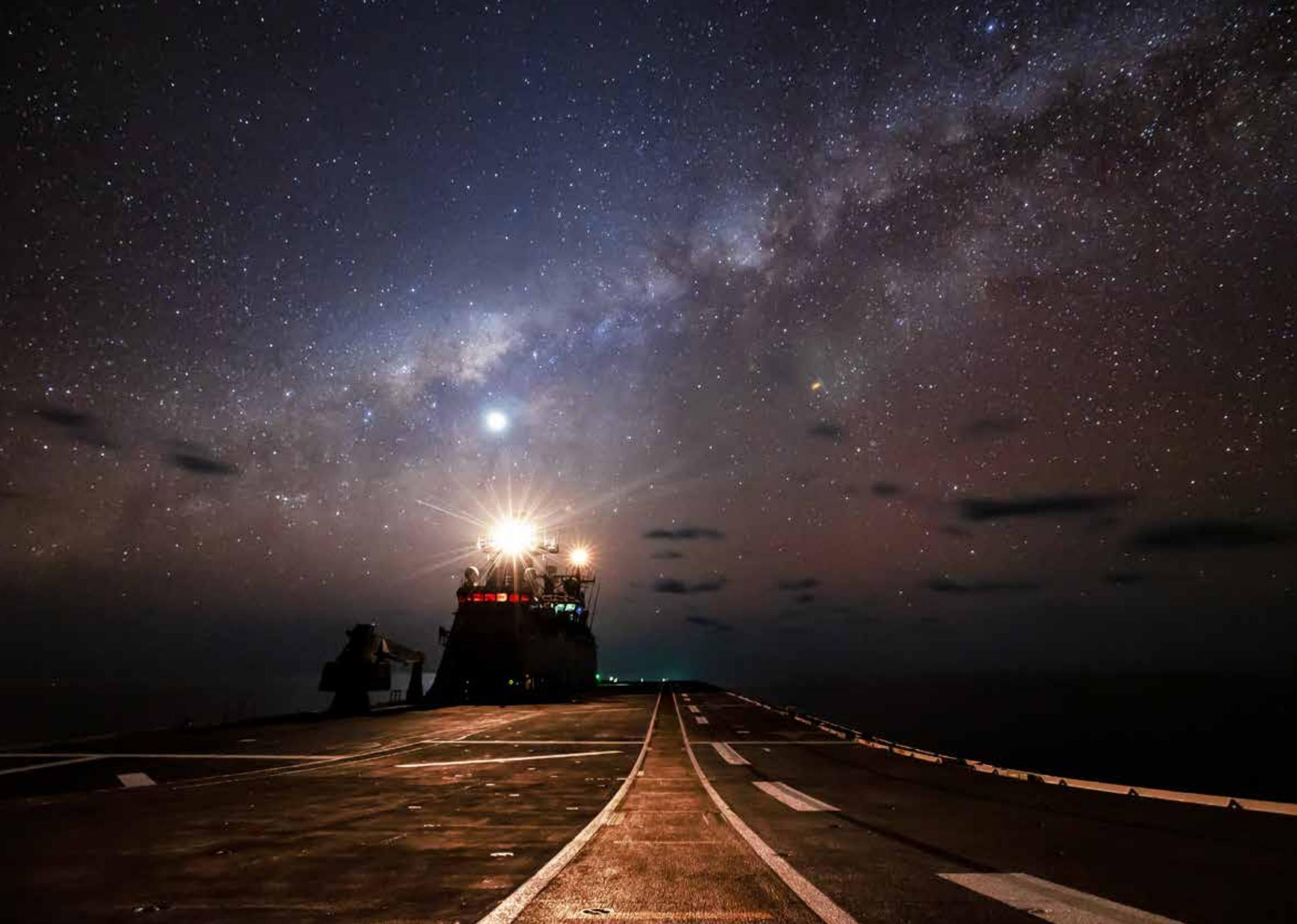




Behind the lens, beyond the line
By Commander Will Singer



“None but those who have endeavoured can realise the insurmountable difficulties of portraying a modern battle by the camera.”

Charles Bean



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I dedicate *Grey Shutterbugs Volume Two* to every Royal Australian Navy Imagery Specialist—past and present—whose lens has captured the soul of service. This volume especially honours those who contributed during periods of high operational tempo, when time was scarce but commitment remained unwavering. Their creativity, professionalism, and resilience are evident in every frame. As I sifted through the submissions, I was struck not only by the technical excellence but by the emotional depth—moments I had lived, now immortalised through the eyes of others. It was both humbling and exhilarating.

Our Navy personnel make extraordinary sacrifices—often unseen, always felt. They serve across oceans and time zones, upholding Australia's security and values with quiet strength. Their families, too, serve in their own way—holding the line at home, enduring absence, and offering unwavering support. Our veterans, who once stood the watch, continue to inspire through their legacy. To all of them: thank you. This book is a tribute to your service, your stories, and your spirit.

shutterbug

(n.) Slang for a photographer, particularly an avid photographer, derived from 'shutter', the camera's light-admitting mechanism.



Foreword 01

I am pleased to introduce the second volume celebrating the outstanding contribution of our Navy's Imagery Specialists: *Grey Shutterbugs Volume Two – Behind the Lens, beyond the line.*

Building on the foundation laid in Volume One, this edition continues the story of the men and women who bear witness to Navy service and preserve its visual record, at home and abroad. By the very nature of their role, Imagery Specialists operate where it matters most—embedded with our people, alongside our ships and aircraft, and in the midst of operations. Their work captures the full spectrum of Navy life: the precision and lethality of maritime combat power, and the professionalism, resilience and humanity that underpin it.

Through their imagery, they provide compelling evidence to the Australian community, and to our allies and partners, of Navy in action—from the firing of advanced weapons systems at sea to the deeply human moments of connection during humanitarian and disaster response. Their work is essential for the Royal Australian Navy to tell our story and have presence in front of the nation every day.

Their technical excellence, mastery and commitment to telling Navy's story allow us to better understand who we are, what we do, and why it matters. They offer Australians, and audiences around the world, an authentic view of our Navy and its people. It is entirely fitting that the stories of these Imagery Specialists are told through their own remarkable work, captured in this powerful collection.



Mark Hammond AO

**Vice Admiral, Royal Australian Navy
Chief of Navy**



Foreword 02

In the Royal Australian Navy, stories are not only told through words—they're captured in light, shadow, and motion. *Grey Shutterbugs Volume Two* is a testament to that truth. Within these pages, you'll find more than photographs. You'll find moments of courage, connection, and quiet resilience—each frame a window into the lived experience of our incredible Imagery Specialists.

These professionals do far more than document operations and activities. They shape how we are seen by our own people, by our partners, and by the public. Their work is strategic, emotional, and enduring. It brings to life the stories of those who serve, the environments they operate in, and the missions they fulfil.

This volume showcases the artistry and adaptability of Navy photographers across two decades of service. From the storm-lashed decks of HMAS *Warramunga* to capturing Australian Army colleagues on approach to a beach landing for Exercise KERIS WOOMERA, each image carries the weight of purpose. The accompanying narratives reveal the people behind the lens—diverse in background, united in mission, and driven by a shared commitment to excellence.

As you turn these pages, I invite you to look beyond the composition and into the character. They are portraits of sailors who chase light in the darkest conditions, who frame history in real time, who keep Australians informed, and who remind us that every deployment, every evolution, and every sacrifice deserves to be remembered.

To our Imagery Specialists: thank you for your skilful work, showcasing our people and what we do. To the reader: welcome aboard.



Captain Kelli Lunt, RAN

**Director Military Public Affairs
Strategic Communications Advisor -
Chief of Joint Operations**

Introduction: Commander Will Singer

Our evolving posture

Since *Grey Shutterbugs Volume One* was released in 2021, Australia's Defence Force has stepped into a new era—one defined by stronger regional partnerships, modern capabilities, and a renewed focus on people. Through the lens of our talented Imagery Specialists, we see a Navy that's more active across the Indo-Pacific, supporting peace, security, and humanitarian missions. These visual records offer a compelling lens into how Australia's military posture has adapted to meet regional challenges and doctrinal shifts.

The Royal Australian Navy's increased tempo—marked by expanded deployments, amphibious readiness, and maritime diplomacy—signals a deliberate pivot toward persistent presence and deterrence by denial. The enhanced amphibious capability allowed landing helicopter dock platforms and landing craft to support humanitarian assistance and disaster relief missions. Regional partnerships have been strengthened and are evident in joint patrols and port visits across Southeast Asia and the Pacific, reinforcing Australia's commitment to maritime security and rules-based order.

Together, these changes illustrate a Defence Force that is more agile, regionally attuned, and strategically communicative than at any point in recent history. From exercises to community engagement, the Royal Australian Navy is telling a powerful story—one of professionalism, resilience, and regional leadership.

Imagery Specialists in the Royal Australian Navy play a vital role in shaping how the Defence Force is seen—both within its ranks and by the public. In the chapters following, the reader will attest that far beyond simply taking photos, our Imagery Specialists are trained storytellers who capture the essence of operations, exercises, and everyday service life using industry-leading cameras and video equipment. Their work documents history in real time, preserving moments of courage, camaraderie, and commitment that might otherwise go unseen.

Beyond public affairs support, Navy Imagery Specialists contribute far beyond public affairs, providing imagery that supports operational awareness and informed decision-making across the Fleet. By capturing and processing visual information, they help build a clearer picture of the maritime environment and enable commanders to understand what is happening around them. When deployed, Imagery Specialists produce professional imagery products that assist Navy's analytical and intelligence processes, supporting officers responsible for information effects and enhancing situational understanding across the battlespace. Their work ensures that imagery strengthens both Navy's operational planning and its broader communication efforts.

There is a rhythm to life in the Navy. For Imagery Specialists, that rhythm pulses through the lens—framed by discipline, driven by curiosity, and coloured by connection. Whether it's the splash of a swimmer's dive or the golden light on a bridge wing at sunset, every image tells a story. It has been an absolute delight trawling through the fine work of my Navy colleagues – some of which I was a part of too.

Our specialists are embedded across Navy, Army, and Air Force environments, often working in dynamic and unpredictable conditions. Whether aboard a warship during a multinational exercise or on the ground supporting humanitarian missions, their ability to adapt and visually communicate is critical. Their imagery supports operational reporting, strategic communication, and public engagement—making them essential to both internal documentation and external diplomacy. Their work not only informs and inspires but also builds a legacy, ensuring that the sacrifices and achievements of Defence personnel are remembered and respected for generations to come.

Grey Shutterbugs Volume Two introduces the work of six Imagery Specialists and showcases photographs of people and platforms taken on exercises, operations and deployments from 2004 to the present.

These are their stories.



01.



**Chief Petty Officer
Yuri Ramsey**

*Framing the fight,
finding the light*

'I didn't walk into the Navy—I was shoved. My dad saw something I didn't: a kid drifting without drive, without purpose. The Navy gave me both. It gave me structure, direction, and a reason to push myself. That shove turned out to be the best thing that ever happened to me.'

Before the uniform, I was a corner shop kid, a McDonald's crew member, and a Games Workshop enthusiast. I helped open the first store in Brisbane in '97. I loved it—miniatures, community, creativity. But I knew it wasn't forever. The Navy was,' Yuri said.

Yuri has moved too often to pin down where home is. But Nowra feels right. 'I've got a house there, and the South Coast has a rhythm I like—quiet, grounded, beautiful. It's where I plan to retire, and maybe, finally, unpack properly.'

When he is not behind the lens, Yuri is hiking in the bush, clearing the head. Modelling and miniature wargames sharpen strategy and creativity.

'I love classic cinema—Lawrence of Arabia is a masterclass in scale and silence. Astronomy, science, and a good book—these are the things that keep me curious.'

'I don't have a family of my own, so I've never had to juggle deployments with parenting or partnership. But I've seen my colleagues do it, and I have nothing but respect. Their resilience is a different kind of strength. When things get hard, I don't flinch—I push through. Resilience isn't optional in this job. You adapt, focus, and keep moving. Especially when the mission demands more than comfort,' he said.

Yuri is the Imagery Standards Manager and what keeps him up at night isn't the gear—it's the people.

'Driving change is tough. But tougher still is wondering if I'm doing enough to lift the next generation. I want our Imagery Specialists to be sharper, braver, and better supported than I ever was.'

'Being an Imagery Specialist is a privilege. We get access others don't—ships, aircraft, operations, people. We're entrusted with telling the Navy's story, and more importantly, the story of its people. That's not a task—it's a responsibility,' he admitted.

'And every challenge reminded me why I stayed: to push, to capture, and to repeat—until the story is told right.'

He has travelled far and wide - Faslane in Scotland stands out.

'As part of "Long Look", I was embedded with the Royal Navy at their submarine base. Astute-class boats, nuclear deterrents, and a whole new perspective on maritime defence. It was cold, intense, and unforgettable,' Yuri recalls.

Some deployments are etched in his memory. HMAS Sydney in 2001—three days' notice after 9/11, six months in the Gulf. HMAS Warramunga in 2004—chasing Patagonian Toothfish poachers through Sea State 7, halfway to South Africa. Operation FIJI ASSIST in 2016—delivering aid aboard HMAS Canberra, witnessing devastation and the unbreakable spirit of the Fijians. And the Middle East Area of Operation with JTF633—body armour, rifle, pistol, and a full camera kit in Afghanistan.

'I still don't know how I got the shots with all that weight. Every assignment taught me something. Every image captured a moment that mattered.'

'Staying humble, staying open—that's how you evolve.'

He believes that technology has changed the game—but not the mission. Drones, or Remotely Piloted Aircraft (RPAs), have taken what was once reserved for high-end production and dropped it into their kit bags.

'They're compact, cost-effective, and capable of angles we used to dream about. But the real shift isn't just in the gear—it's in the mindset. Imagery is more accessible than ever, but impact still depends on intent,' he said.

Yuri finds Artificial Intelligence both fascinating and dangerous. It was designed to replace factory work, but it's now creeping into creative fields.

'We need to stay vigilant. Human judgment, emotion, and nuance can't be coded. Not yet. Growth isn't just technical. It's relational.

'I learn from the new Imagery Specialists as much as they learn from me. Staying humble, staying open—that's how you evolve. The moment you think you've mastered this craft is the moment it starts slipping away.

'To the rookies: this job isn't about pretty pictures. It's about strategic communication. You're not just capturing moments—you're translating the intent of the Chief of Navy, the Navy, and the ADF. That takes resilience, clarity, and a deep respect for the mission. Every Imagery Specialist should carry a hunger to improve. That's the trait he values most. Curiosity is your compass. Feedback is your fuel.

'You respect the moment, but you shape it to reflect capability, emotion, and truth.'

Yuri reflected on the people who influenced him during his career.

'Honestly, it's hard to pick just one person—so many people have influenced and supported me along the way. If I had to start somewhere, it would be LTGEN Susan Coyle. She was CJTF633 during one of my deployments, and she's not only an exceptional leader but a genuinely good person. She helped me grow both professionally and personally. What really stuck with me was that she saw me as a person—not just 'The Phot'—and that meant a lot,' he recalls.

'I've also been lucky enough to work closely with Chief of Navy, VADM Mark Hammond. That experience gave me a whole new level of respect for what that role involves. He's an incredible leader and an even better human being. The way he lives the Chief of Navy motto, 'Service before Self', isn't just words—it's who he is, and that's inspiring.

'I would like to thank SGNLDR Chris Moon. A technical and professional mentor. SGNLDR Moon, a former ABC Cinematographer and filmmaker and now a Public Affairs Officer for the Royal Australian Air Force. He has been one of my biggest influences. His deep understanding of film

and television completely changed how I think about visual storytelling. In a short time he has built up my technical understanding which has made me a stronger videographer and also a stronger mentor and leader.'

He studies the greats. World Press Photo, Nature Photographer of the Year, and the work of his peers. But his true influences are cinematographers.

'Freddie Young taught me that the environment is a character. Roger Deakins showed me how light builds mood. Andrew Lesnie blended myth with realism. Hitchcock drilled intent into every frame. And John Lasseter reminded me that connection is everything.

'When I shoot, I move first. I find the angle, chase the light, and if needed, I direct the scene. I've repositioned warships and helicopters mid-op to get the shot. It's not ego—it's storytelling. You respect the moment, but you shape it to reflect capability, emotion, and truth.

'Every image I take has a job to do. Whether it's showcasing resilience, honouring service, or supporting intelligence, I shoot with purpose. If I've done it right, the image doesn't need a caption—it speaks for itself, Yuri said.

Some of Yuri's best work came from the worst conditions: –30°C windchill on a winch, hanging out of a helicopter to frame a warship mid-exercise, or battling typhoons, deserts and war zones in full combat kit and camera gear. He learned to adapt, endure and find the story in the chaos. That's the job. That's the privilege. And it's the legacy he hopes to leave behind.



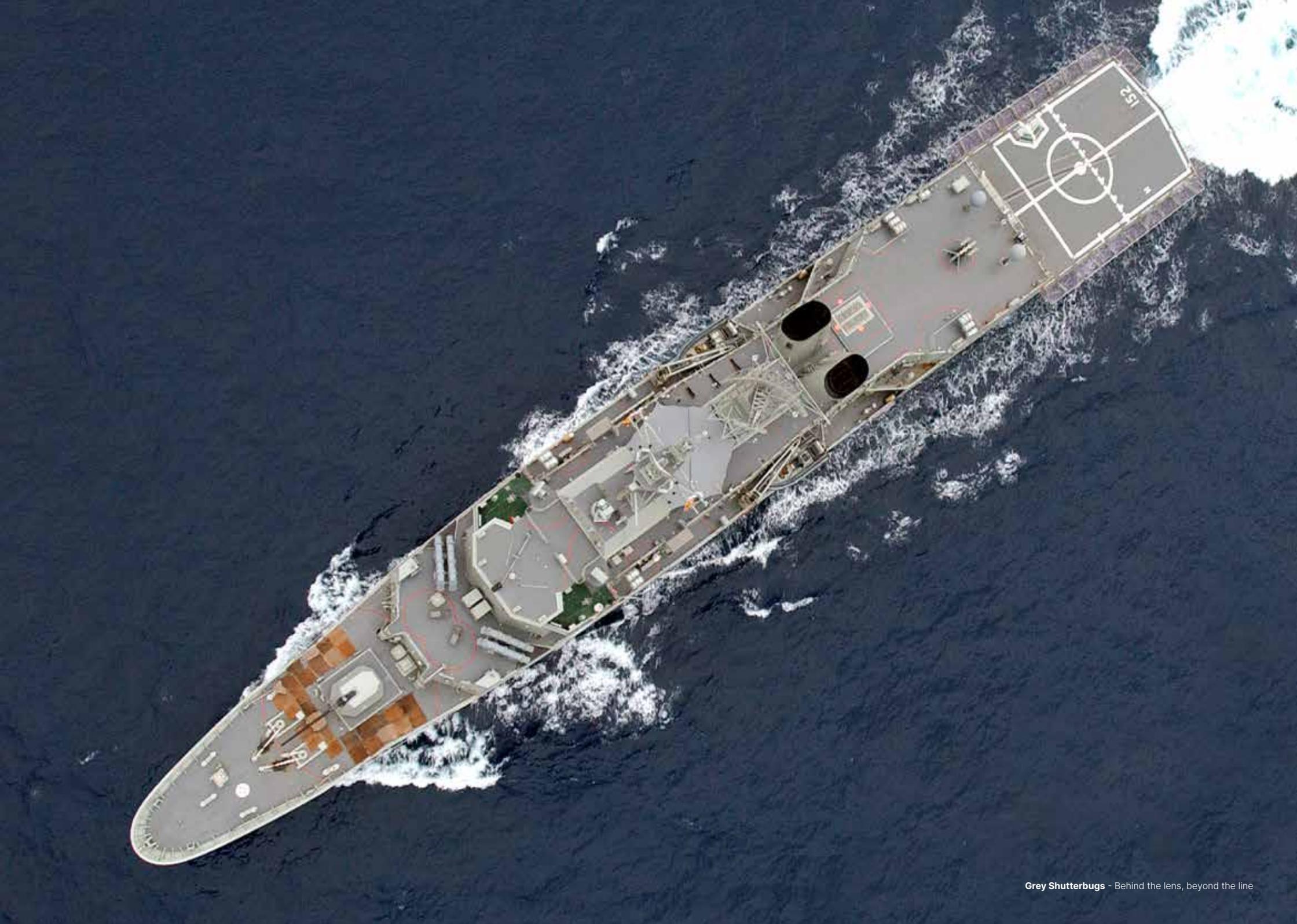
The *MAYA V*, caught fishing illegally in the Australian Economic Zone. The Boarding Team of HMAS *Warramunga* fast-ropes onto *MAYA V* from a Seahawk Helicopter.

This image captures the moment a Navy Seahawk winches an aircrewman onto the deck of the *Maya V*, an illegal poaching vessel pursued by HMAS *Warramunga*. The operation was conducted in extreme conditions, with a windchill factor of approximately -30°C , and involved significant risk. This image highlights the critical role of Defence imagery—not only for public affairs, but also for intelligence gathering and evidentiary documentation.



HMAS *Warramunga* (FFH 152) during Exercise TALISMAN SABRE 2005.

Having spent an inordinate amount of time aboard HMAS *Warramunga*, I developed a special fondness for it. This image, taken during one of many Exercise TALISMAN SABRE exercises, was something I had planned for some time. To capture this dramatic top-down view, I positioned myself at the door of a helicopter as it banked hard over the ship—held in place only by a dispatcher harness and the G-force of the manoeuvre. Interestingly, while I don't like heights, I have no such concerns when flying in a helo.







A sea of white: Royal Australian Navy sailors march down George Street during the Freedom of Entry to the City of Sydney.

The Royal Australian Navy was invited to march through Sydney for a Freedom of Entry to the city—the first in 20 years, and the largest contingent to do so since World War Two. Nearly a third of the Navy participated, following a formal Fleet Entry the previous day. I was stationed atop a building on George Street to capture the ‘Sea of White’ stretching back toward the Harbour Bridge and forward toward Town Hall. Looking down, I saw an incredible display of repetition and uniformity. Capturing the image with a Dutch tilt added emphasis to the formation of sailors. This photograph earned me the Rosemary Rodwell Memorial Prize—a proud moment in my career.



Amphibious assault ship USS America provides an impressive backdrop as HMAS Canberra’s embarked MRH-90 helicopter prepares to lift a load off the deck of underway replenishment oiler USNS Rappahannock.

Captured during Exercise RIMPAC 2016 while I was aboard HMAS Canberra, this image represented a rare opportunity to shoot stills instead of video, which was my primary duty at the time. It highlights the strength of working with partners and allies, depicting one of Canberra’s MRH-90 helicopters lifting stores from USNS Rappahannock, with USS America providing an impressive backdrop. A telephoto lens was used to compress the scene, making the elements appear closer than they were. As always, when photographing helicopters, careful attention to shutter speed was essential—not to freeze the rotors, but to retain motion and realism.





A Force maritime de l'aéronautique navale (French Naval Aviation) Falcon 200 Guardian maritime surveillance aircraft locates Royal New Zealand Navy HMNZS *Te Mana* underway during Exercise KAKADU 2018.

This image is a strong demonstration that we don't operate solely on Australian platforms. Captured during Exercise KAKADU from a French Naval Aviation Falcon 200, this image highlights multinational cooperation in a large-scale exercise. The Falcon simulated an 'attacker' against maritime targets—in this case, the New Zealand frigate HMNZS *Te Kaha*. The ship's bold wake and strong lines emphasize speed and precision, while the perspective from the aircraft reinforces the significance of air-sea integration.



Anzac-class frigate HMAS *Perth* and Spanish replenishment ship ESPS *Cantabria* conduct a nighttime replenishment at sea during Exercise TALISMAN SABRE.

Another Exercise TALISMAN SABRE—this time aboard HMAS *Perth*, shown here conducting a Replenishment at Sea (RAS) with Spanish ship ESPS *Cantabria*, before the selection of the same design for the Royal Australian Navy. Nighttime RAS operations are always a challenge, especially under cloudy skies with minimal moonlight and red lighting, which is generally not ideal for photography. This image was captured handheld at a half-second exposure—right at the edge of what's feasible. The motion and moody atmosphere came through beautifully, showcasing that the Navy operates in all conditions.







Royal Australian Air Force pilot Flight Lieutenant Hayley Moulds is behind a KC-30A Multi-Role Tanker Transport (MRTT) at an airbase in the Middle East.

While assigned to JTF633 in the Middle East, I had the opportunity to travel extensively and capture imagery across the region. This image was taken at the main airbase and features Flight Lieutenant Hayley Moulds—at the time, the first female captain of a KC-30A Multi-Role Tanker. With limited time to shoot, I focused on conveying pride, professionalism, and capability. Framing Flight Lieutenant Moulds against the rear of the aircraft not only identifies the platform as a refueller, but also positions her as master of the aircraft—commanding both presence and purpose. The composition, with its strong lines and perspective, reinforces her authority and the significance of her role.



HMAS *Warramunga* conducts a 5-inch gun firing during training exercises in the West Australian Exercise Area.

A 5-inch gun firing—always a crowd pleaser, even if not entirely original. This image was the very first frame I captured during HMAS *Warramunga*'s Regional Presence Deployment, the frigate's first since completing the AMCAP upgrade. As part of platform certification, weapons systems must be tested to validate operational capability. *Warramunga* conducted this firing serial at sunrise (0631), allowing me to capture the rare and vivid colours of the blast—something not typically visible during daylight. The timing, the light, and the moment made this shot particularly special.





HMAS *Warramunga* encounters heavy weather en route to Korea.

This image has become something of a signature for me—captured for the third time aboard HMAS *Warramunga*, and without a doubt the strongest version yet, thanks to one of Canon's new mirrorless cameras. We were transiting toward Korea through a typhoon, producing spectacular bow waves that were both visually stunning and physically punishing. Capturing this shot was no easy feat: the ship pitched steeply, shuddering with each impact as seawater crashed into and over the bridge. These are dangerous conditions that demand exceptional skill from the helmsman and officers of the watch. The image is a visceral reminder of how unforgiving the sea can be—and how we in the Navy embrace it.



HMAS *Warramunga* rendezvous with the United States Navy aircraft carrier USS *Carl Vinson* during a Regional Presence Deployment.

I've always loved capturing aerial imagery, and this rendezvous between HMAS *Warramunga* and the Nimitz-class nuclear-powered aircraft carrier USS *Carl Vinson* off the Northwest Shelf was a standout moment. Shots like this require precise coordination—directing both ships and aircraft to achieve the ideal composition. The image powerfully illustrates the scale and capability of our allies; while *Warramunga* is a highly capable platform, it is visually and operationally dwarfed by the sheer presence of an aircraft carrier. The glassy water adds clarity and contrast, juxtaposing a calm environment with the formidable presence of warships.



02.



**Chief Petty Officer
Helen Frank**

Focus and fire

Helen joined the Navy for the adventure. She grew up in a small country town and always wanted to see the world and saw the Navy as a great way to do that.

From the quiet hills of Torbay near Albany, Western Australia, to the bustling streets of Sydney, her journey has been anything but ordinary.

'After being gone for almost 30 years, I don't have many friends left in the Great Southern Region. I think I would consider Sydney home at the moment,' she said.

Before the Navy, life was simple. She worked in a shoe shop for six months between leaving school and joining the Navy. But the call to serve, to explore, and to capture the world through a lens was stronger. As an Imagery Specialist, she found her calling.

'Somewhere in the world someone is doing it much tougher than me, so even when it's hard, it's not that hard.'

Her resilience is quiet but unwavering.

'Imagery Specialists are a small, elite group. Being a part of that makes me really proud,' she said. 'We have some amazing photographers right now and it's a pleasure to be in a role where I can support them to get the job done.'

'I think I'm naturally a resilient person. I just roll with the punches. Somewhere in the world someone is doing it much tougher than me, so even when it's hard, it's not that hard,' Helen said.

Outside of work, she's a powerlifter.

'I've had the opportunity to compete on the world stage. Navy has always supported me in this and I enjoy staying fit and strong,' she said.

Her lens has taken her across the Pacific—Hawaii, Tonga, Vanuatu, Fiji, New Caledonia, and Papua New Guinea. But one trip stands out.

'A trip to Korea with the Federation Guard and Australian Korean War veterans to mark the 60th anniversary of the armistice was unforgettable. To travel to places where historic battles took place with the people who fought in them was amazing.'

'To rescue fellow Aussies in their time of need was unforgettable.'

'One of my most memorable assignments was during the bushfires in January 2020. I was deployed on HMAS Choules and helped rescue 1,000 people off the beach in Mallacoota. To rescue fellow Aussies in their time of need was unforgettable. My photos were published around the world, which was amazing,' she recalls.

Technology is changing fast, and she's keeping pace.

'We have to work hard to stay up with technology—whether that's to stay relevant or to keep our country safe, both are important.'

'I volunteer to shoot jobs and deploy whenever I can. Instructing our new photographers and training junior Imagery Specialists has made me stay up with techniques and gear,' Helen said.

Even as a senior, she stays sharp. Her advice to new Imagery Specialists is simple but powerful:

'Don't be afraid to ask. Whether it's asking the Commanding Officer to put the sea boat in the water for a shot or asking an Admiral to stand a certain way—just ask. The worst that could happen is you'll be told no. The best that could happen is you take the shot of your life,' she said.

She believes people skills are essential, especially communicating to the talent that is being photographed to make them feel comfortable and at ease, and to communicate with Command to get things done.

'I've definitely made mistakes—from not having a card in my camera to arriving late to a race that had already finished.'

When asked about influences, Helen said, 'I'm always admiring other people's work and I think I've taken inspiration from many people along the way.'

Her favourite photo is a reenactment of the bombing of Darwin. The Army does this every year before the commemoration service on 19 February.

'It was just a right place, right time sort of photo—the smoke, the soldiers in period uniform, and the artillery,' she said.

She has learned through trial and error and her philosophy is grounded in humility and passion.

'I've definitely made mistakes—from not having a card in my camera to arriving late to a race that had already finished.'

'Photos rarely turn out how the photographer envisioned. Sometimes it's a great shot, just not exactly how it was imagined. You learn to go with it and let the process guide you,' Helen confessed.

And what does she want her photos to say?

'I want my photos to show the hard work and dedication of service men and women. But I also want to show that we have fun, make friends, and enjoy ourselves. I want my pride in my service to show,' she said.



Members of the Country Fire Association make their way to the beach at Mallacoota as they prepare for evacuation onboard HMAS *Choules* during Operation BUSHFIRE ASSIST 19-20.

This image was captured when some of the first evacuees made their way down to the boat ramp at Mallacoota. Everything was burnt as far as the eye could see and most of these people were volunteer firefighters who had spent days keeping everyone as safe as they could. You can see the relief in their faces as they see the light at the end of the tunnel in the form of HMAS *Choules*, who will get them home.



HMA Ships *Canberra*, *Anzac*, *Sirius*, *Parramatta* and *Melbourne* operate together off the Australian East Coast during Exercise OCEAN RAIDER.

I took this photo when I was posted to HMAS *Canberra*. The Fleet Commander at the time wanted a formation photo as ships hadn't been working in company much. The ship's navigator, Lieutenant Commander Rhys-Jones asked me to help plan the formation and together we worked out everything from the distance the ships were apart to the direction of travel. It was the first time I had been consulted so closely for a PHOTEX.







Petty Officer Aviation Technician Avionics Gregory Lord, Leading Seaman Aviation Technician Avionics David Dodd and Able Seaman Aviation Technician Avionics Nicholas Yates from HMAS *Canberra*'s flight conduct an engine change out on a MRH-90 aircraft while at sea.

I took this photo when the ship's flight were conducting their first ever full engine change out onboard an LHD. The guys had setup workshop lighting that worked like studio lighting for me so I took advantage and got this shot.



HMAS *Canberra* transits through the Bass Strait as part of the Royal Australian Navy's regular activities in the area to demonstrate the ability to protect Australia's borders and offshore maritime interests.

HMAS *Canberra* was sailing through the Bass Strait and checking on the oil rigs there. It was late in the day and we launched the helicopter to take photos. The pilot asked me if we had got the shot just as I took this photo and I said "Yes Sir, we've nailed it."







A United States Navy Landing Craft, Air Cushion (LCAC) from amphibious transport dock USS *San Diego* enters the well dock of HMAS *Canberra* off the coast of Hawaii during Exercise Rim of the Pacific (RIMPAC) 2016.

This photo was taken during the first RIMPAC that our new LHD, HMAS *Canberra*, participated in. The Commanding Officer at the time, CAPT Chris Smith, wanted to play with all the toys so we had all the American helicopters land and even got to see this LCAC (Landing Craft, Air Cushion) up close. I love the symmetry of this shot.



Commanding Officer HMAS *Canberra*, Captain Chris Smith on the bridge as the ship sails from Townsville en route to Hawaii to participate in RIMPAC.

I took this photo of then Captain Smith (now Rear Admiral Smith) was on the bridge of HMAS *Canberra* when he was the Commanding Officer. I love the look of contemplation and the light falling on his face. Rear Admiral Smith is one of my favourite naval officers, always even tempered, caring and willing to listen.







Australian Army soldier Lance Corporal Daniel Strutt from the Pipes and Drums at 2nd Battalion, Royal Australian Regiment, plays as HMAS Canberra comes into Townsville on completion of Sea Series 2015.

During the Sea Series of exercises in 2015 we had soldiers onboard from 2nd Battalion. I asked Lance Corporal Daniel Strutt to come to the flight deck at sunrise in his full kit up. This slightly silhouetted shot was my favourite from the shoot. Something a little different from the normal view on a Navy ship.



Lance Corporal Neil Bautista from Australia's Federation Guard with Mr John Hickman from Traralgon, Victoria at the United Nations Memorial Cemetery Korea.

I went to Korea with the Federation Guard and some Australian Korean War veterans to mark the 60th anniversary of the signing of the armistice. To travel to places where historic battles took place with the people who fought in them was amazing. I really like this photo of a young soldier sharing an umbrella and a joke with a veteran.







Soldiers from 8th/12th Medium Regiment re-enact the anti-aircraft fire on the first bombing raids by the Japanese in Darwin in 1942.

This photo is of a re-enactment of the bombing of Darwin. The Army do this every year before the commemoration service on 19 February. It was just a right place, right time sort of photo, the smoke, the soldiers in period uniform and the artillery.



HMAS *Parramatta* in Milford Sound, New Zealand.

It's not often you see Australian ships and snow-capped mountains. I was onboard HMAS *Parramatta* and sailed into Milford Sound in New Zealand. We launched the helo and this was the resulting shot.



03.



**Petty Officer Imagery Specialist
Christopher Szumlanski**

A roadie's guide to Navy imagery

Chris didn't join the Navy because of a childhood dream or family tradition. It was a moment of clarity. After a decade as a roadie—rigging stages, programming smart lighting, and working live music and film sets across Melbourne—he'd had his fill of fun. Maybe too much.

He studied electrical mechanics at TAFE, not for a career, but to figure out why his DIY projects kept shorting out.

Today, his hobbies are a mix of nostalgia and adrenaline: vinyl records (over 1,500), First-Person-View drones, PC gaming, motorcycles, live bands, and the occasional two-record spin session. Not a DJ—just enthusiastic.

Chris recalls that after years of juggling work and study, a friend mentioned the ADF could pay you while you trained. That spark led to a recruiter's office, an aptitude test, and a choice: Electronics Technician – Communications. Six months later, at 28, he stepped onto the bus bound for HMAS *Cerberus*.

'Seven years in the trade followed—fault-finding, systems management, shipboard problem-solving. Then a nudge from an Executive Officer opened a new door: an Expression of Interest to become an Imagery Specialist. That's when the story truly began,' he said.

'Because it's not about the task, it's about the people.'

'To be an Imagery Specialist is to be a collector of moments. Sent to places others can't go, tasked with capturing events few will ever witness. The job is hard to explain—until you show the photos. Then the disbelief fades, and the story comes alive. These images aren't just documentation. They're proof. They're memory. They're legacy,' he said.

Chris has seen unforgettable places: rescuing a stranded yachtsman in the Indian Ocean aboard HMAS *Ballarat*, meeting villagers in Solomon Islands during Operation RENDER SAFE, hovering over a multinational fleet during Exercise RIMPAC, and cracking coconuts with 3RAR on a remote South Pacific island. But his favourite?

'The upper decks of a ship on a moonless winter night. Step outside and the world disappears into inky blackness. Slowly, stars emerge. A mast beacon. A cigarette ember. The white wash of the ship's wake. Then—the Milky Way. Billions of stars, the galactic disc, the Large Magellanic Cloud. If you're lucky, bioluminescent waves shimmer below. It's a view few will ever see,' Chris said.

"The Navy Imagery Unit is small-but dedicated."

Whether it's a multinational exercise, a graduation ceremony, or an official portrait—from Seaman to Chief of Navy—every subject gets the same 100%. Because it's not about the task, it's about the people. And through his lens, he's met some of the bravest, most exceptional men and women in the ADF.

Chris logged onto the internet in 1996—and hasn't logged off since. From crystal radios built at age six to drone racing in paddocks, his world has always been wired. He's watched tech evolve from dial-up to AI, from analogue sound desks to palm-sized supercomputers. And through it all, he's stayed fascinated—not just by what tech can do, but by what it's doing to us.

'I'm basically what happens when you give an adult a job and leave them unsupervised for too long. 'The Navy Imagery Unit is small-but dedicated.' Its strength lies in diversity. Every Imagery Specialist came from somewhere else: Greenies, Stokers, Birdies, Chefos, Dibbies, Storbies, Stewards, Writers, Operators. Each brings their own style, their own approach, and their own way of seeing the world. We're more like a creative workgroup than a military branch. There's not much we can't solve together,' he says.

'It's not enough to know how something works—you have to know why.'

Growth comes from collaboration. From curiosity. From treating skill development like a puzzle game. Whether it's swapping lighting techniques with Army Photos or reverse-engineering a documentary shot from social media, the learning never stops.

Chris has seen the rise of AI, the explosion of social media, and the evolution of drones—from backyard toys to battlefield tools. He built his first quadcopter after watching a YouTube video in 2014. Built six, actually. Raced them. Crashed them. Joked about weaponised drones—until it wasn't a joke anymore.

He's not anti-tech. He's pro-awareness. Because what seems like an innocent post today could cost someone tomorrow. In a world where the customer is the product, understanding the tools we use is more important than ever.

'Tech is powerful. It can be used for good or evil. The problem is, most people can't tell the difference. Curiosity isn't just a trait—it's a survival skill,' Chris said.

For Chris, curiosity drives every frame, every setup, every moment captured. It's not enough to know how something works—you have to know why. From circuit diagrams to camera menus, ship schematics to lighting ratios, understanding the mechanics unlocks the magic.

His journey into Navy photography began with a trial period at the Navy Imagery Unit–West in 2017. What followed was a masterclass in mentorship.

Mentor One taught him how to connect with people before the shutter clicks.

'We take photos of people on their best day, not their worst. As an introvert, directing clients was daunting. But with gentle small talk, relaxed body language, and a warm smile, I learned to put people at ease. Today, it's second nature,' he confessed.

Mentor Two taught him the art of planning. Faced with a wall of gear and no clue what to pack, he was handed an empty camera bag and told to build his own kit. That configuration still serves him today—lean, efficient, and mission-ready.

Mentor Three taught him the science of light. Falloff, angles, ratios, focal lengths—it all clicked. He developed his own method for mobile lighting setups, visualising triangles between camera, subject, and light source. It's hard to explain. Easier to show. But it works—most of the time.

Mentor Four was the Chief Petty Officer and Senior Imagery Specialist. A whirlwind of energy, enthusiasm, and excellence. Whether behind a desk or out on the tools, he gave 100%—every time. And he had a knack for capturing the impossible.

'But when it clicks—when the shot matches the vision—it's magic,' he said.

continued over

'Military photography isn't just about documentation. It's about revelation.'

One day at Fleet Base West, an Anzac-class frigate was returning from deployment. The lighting was perfect. The ship was perfectly framed. Chris raised his camera. Exposure, focus, crop—locked in. Click. Then, over his shoulder—another click.

He turned. The Chief was reviewing his shot. Curious, Chris looked. Same ship. Same crop. Same moment. But something was different. Dolphins. A rainbow. Sea spray caught mid-air in a burst of colour. His own shot? Just a ship. That was the moment he learned about the Pawlenko Shot. The Chief could take the same photo at the same time—but his would have dolphins, rainbows, maybe even unicorns.

'Never assume you've taken the perfect shot. Because Pawlenko might be standing behind you,' Chris said.

His advice for improving your craft?

"Press all the buttons. Or else you'll never know what they do. And practice, practice and practice. Because photography isn't just about gear—it's about curiosity, connection, and the pursuit of something extraordinary.

'A fellow photographer once said, "You take a photo 100 times before you even pick up the camera." Before the bag is unzipped, the mind is already racing: where's the light? What's the angle? Wide or telephoto? Each question generates a mental image. The challenge is translating that image into reality.

'Military photography isn't just about documentation. It's about revelation. Most civilians only see Defence through a 30-second news clip. But behind those headlines are people—exceptional people—doing extraordinary things in unlikely places. And they do it voluntarily. They don't ask for much. Just an acknowledgement,' he suggested.

Imagery Specialists get to show the world what service really looks like. Through photos and video, they tell stories from the inside—stories of grit, grace, and quiet courage. It's not always comfortable. It's rarely easy. But it's always worth capturing.

Chris organised a team-building exercise with his Imagery Specialist colleagues to attend Steve McCurry's exhibition which was well received. Steve McCurry's photojournalism for *National Geographic* left a lasting impression. His ability to capture humanity in raw, vivid detail inspired a generation of storytellers.

And while the best jobs might be intelligence gigs, they're too spicy to print here. Just know: the camera sees things most people never will.



HMAS Hobart and Adelaide alongside Fleet Base East, Sydney.

I graduated as an Imagery Specialist at HMAS *Kuttabul* on 5 December 2017—six months of training, and the start of an incredible journey. With a 0600 flight to Western Australia looming, I was packing up when my instructor tapped me on the shoulder: "Adelaide and Hobart are coming alongside tonight. Full moon. Slightly overcast." He knew exactly what that meant—perfect conditions for night photography. I hesitated, then gave in to the temptation. At 2230, I captured my first post-grad shot: a 30-second exposure on my Canon 5Dmk4, ships bathed in moonlight and cloud. And yes—I made the flight.





Able Seaman Maritime Logistics-Chef Sebastian Louise (centre) provides first-aid assistance to a simulated casualty during a Ships Medical Emergency Team training exercise at the Professional Development Organisation-West medical training facility, HMAS *Stirling*, Western Australia.

While posted to Navy Imagery Unit-West at HMAS *Stirling*, I was tasked with capturing a Ships Medical Emergency Team assessment. It began calmly—students checking gear—then erupted into simulated chaos: fake blood, rubber injuries, and frantic triage drills. Amid the frenzy, one Able Seaman stood out. Calm, focused, running through vitals like clockwork. While the room spun around him, he held the line. I set my Canon 5Dmk3 on a desk and took a 5-second exposure—freezing composure in the middle of controlled mayhem.



HMAS *Hobart*'s embarked MH-60R Seahawk helicopter fires flares off the coast of New South Wales.

One of the highlights of having a flight on board a deployed vessel is their mandatory scheduled systems tests by the embarked flight. One of these tests involves firing their flare decoy system, which looks a lot like a fireworks display launched from the air, always a highlight of the trip.



Royal Australian Navy imagery specialists Petty Officer Christopher Szumlanski (left), Leading Seaman Nadav Harel (centre) and Leading Seaman Sittichai Sakonpoonpol on the flight deck of HMAS Canberra.

During Indo-Pacific Endeavour 2021 aboard HMAS *Canberra*, I deployed with two Leading Seaman Imagery Specialists. COVID restrictions kept us ship-bound the entire time, so we sparked an interdepartmental meme war to stay entertained—and absolutely dominated. The ship's company put a bounty on photos of us for retaliation, but we stayed one step ahead.

Then came the curveball: Navy Social Media requested action shots of deployed Imagery Specialists for an Instagram spotlight. No one wanted their face online—or to hand over fresh meme material. With zero volunteers and no way to opt out, I pitched a workaround: Charlie's Angels-style silhouettes on the flight deck at sunset. Each of us posed with gear, backlit by the low sun, faces hidden but story told. We nailed the shot. It met the brief, dodged the memes, and gave the social media team something they didn't expect—but couldn't reject.







Principle Warfare Officer (PWO) Lieutenant Michael Pigault supervises the operations room on board HMAS Canberra during Exercise BERSAMA GOLD 21.

It's a rare opportunity to be granted permission to enter the Ops Room with a camera, so when it pops up, I usually jump on it. After capturing the Combat System Operators, I turned around to see the PWO perfectly lit by his desk lamp. It took a bit of convincing for him to let me point a camera at him, but after he saw the results, he told me I had an open invitation to come back anytime.



HMAS Canberra under the Milky Way while sailing back to Australian waters after the successful completion of Indo-Pacific Endeavour 21

HMAS Canberra under the Milky Way while sailing back to Australian waters after the successful completion of Indo-Pacific Endeavour 21. I was out on the Quarterdeck staring off into space one evening, and I noticed how clear and bright the night sky was. I ran inside to grab my camera and got permission to sit out on the Flight Deck to try and capture the Milky Way behind the ship. It took me about 50 tries, but I reckon I got it.





HMAS *Adelaide* sits alongside Nuku'alofa to deliver humanitarian stores and medical supplies as part of Operation TONGA ASSIST 2022.

I took this shot while we were deployed on HMAS *Adelaide* for Operation TONGA ASSIST, a humanitarian aid and disaster relief mission. We had just arrived in Nuku'alofa, Tonga, to deliver much-needed supplies. I'd been to this port a few times before, and I remember it always being so full of colour and life. But this time was different — the entire city was blanketed in grey. The eruption of the nearby Hunga Tonga-Hunga Ha'apai volcano had left everything coated in a thick layer of ash. It was surreal. With permission, I launched the drone to get a better view from above, and this photo captures that moment perfectly.



Australian Army aircrew stand by the CH-47F Chinook helicopter at the summit of Kao Island, Tonga, after transporting three Tongan technicians to the island to repair telecommunications equipment as part of Operation TONGA ASSIST 2022.

This moment was also part of Operation TONGA ASSIST. The Army CH-47F Chinook flight embarked on HMAS *Adelaide* had the job of flying a team of Telecommunications Technicians to the top of Kao Island to fix a radio transmission tower. After we landed and the techs were dropped off, I asked the aircrew if I could jump out and grab a quick shot of the Chinook. I got two big thumbs up — so off I went. When I turned around to take the photo, the crew was already in position, striking their best *Top Gun* pose like absolute pros. Those guys always bring the style — 100 points every time.





The combined naval vessels berthed alongside Joint Base Pearl Harbor-Hickam in Hawaii before commencing the multi-national military exercise, Exercise (Rim of the Pacific) RIMPAC 2022.

I captured this image in Pearl Harbor, Hawaii, during Exercise RIMPAC 2022. I'd worked with the Public Affairs Officer a few times before, and he knew I had a bit of a thing for astrophotography. He actually tipped me off about the view from across the water, where all the ships were lined up for the exercise — said it was something special. I asked how tricky it would be to get permission to head over and take a shot, and somehow, he made it happen. This image is a composite of 21 long exposures stitched together, so the resolution is massive. If you download it from the Defence Image Gallery, you can zoom right in and catch all the incredible detail. It was one of those moments where everything just came together perfectly.





United States Marine Corps MV-22B Osprey performs deck landing maneuvers onboard HMAS Canberra during Exercise RIMPAC 2022.

The United States crews are training with HMAS Canberra's crew working at night within the Ships Tilt Rotor Operating Limits (STROL), flying between USS Essex and Canberra as part of their night competency training exercises. The night serials ensure that not only can interchangeability be achieved during daylight hours between our navies, but also by night.



Aurora Australis as observed from HMAS Cerberus in Victoria.

On 11 May 2024, HMAS Cerberus bore witness to a spectacular display of Aurora Australis throughout the southern skies. Visible in both the Northern and Southern hemispheres, Auroras are the result of disturbances in the Earth's magnetosphere caused by the solar winds.



04.



**Leading Seaman Imagery Specialist
Sittichai Sakonpoopol**

Legacy, belonging and the Navy way

As an immigrant to Australia, the Navy gave Sittichai a chance to grow linguistically, professionally, and personally. It helped him improve his English, gain valuable education, and develop the kind of discipline and resilience that only service life can instil.

'I didn't grow up by the sea. I wasn't raised on tales of warships or naval tradition. But I did grow up with a hunger to explore, to connect, and to contribute.'

'Joining the Royal Australian Navy gave me all of that—and more. It gave me a way to see the world, meet people from every walk of life, and earn a stable living while serving something greater than myself.'

'I came here alone, but through the Navy, I found a new family. My family is far away, but never out of reach. We speak daily, and they understand the demands of my role. Their support gives me strength, especially when the going gets tough.'

'In those moments, I lean on my mates, my supervisors, and the tight-knit network that surrounds me. Together, we find a way through,' Sittichai said.

'In my line of work, no two days are the same.'

Sydney is home for Sittichai. It's where he first landed, where he met friends who became his support network, and where he learned what belonging truly feels like. That sense of community—of shared purpose and mutual respect—is what makes it home.

Before Sittichai donned the uniform, he managed a spa. It might seem worlds apart, but that role taught him leadership, communication, and how to bring calm to chaos. Those skills followed him into the Navy, where he now serves as an Imagery Specialist—a role that demands both technical precision and emotional intelligence.

'In my line of work, no two days are the same. Technology evolves fast—drones, social media, new imaging platforms—and expectations are high. Staying ahead means constant learning, adapting, and refining my craft. But that's also what makes it exciting.'

'Being an Imagery Specialist isn't just about taking photos - it's about capturing history. Every image I produce becomes part of the Navy's legacy—snapshots of courage, camaraderie, and commitment. These visuals will outlast us, telling future generations who we were and what we stood for,' he said.

One of Sittichai's proudest moments was travelling to the Maldives during Indo-Pacific Endeavour 25. The scenery was breathtaking, but what made it unforgettable was the chance to engage with the local community—sharing stories, tasting their food, and learning about their values. It was diplomacy through humanity, and he was honoured to be part of it.

'Of all my assignments, commissioning HMAS Brisbane in 2018 stands out. It was tough, no doubt—but it was also deeply rewarding. We built something together, and the friendships forged in that crucible still hold strong today.'

'As technology continues to evolve, I believe in embracing it responsibly. Social media and drones offer powerful tools for connection and documentation, but they must be wielded with care and within policy. The future is coming fast, and I'm ready to meet it with open eyes and a steady hand. Because through my lens, I see more than just moments. I see meaning,' Sittichai said.

'This job isn't just about taking photos—it's about telling stories, building relationships, and growing through every challenge ...'

Sittichai believes that to grow as an Imagery Specialist is to travel with purpose.

'Every trip—whether aboard HMAS Canberra or ashore in a foreign port—is a chance to see the world differently. New environments spark new techniques. Diverse cultures offer fresh perspectives. And each assignment becomes a classroom for creativity, adaptability, and professional evolution.'

'This job isn't just about taking photos—it's about telling stories, building relationships, and growing through every challenge. It's a career that offers travel, cultural immersion, and personal transformation,' he said.

In the field, attitude matters. Physical fitness is essential, but so is being approachable. Exercises often involve working with unfamiliar teams—Army, Air Force, international partners—and success depends on building rapport quickly. A smile, a handshake, a shared laugh before the shutter clicks: these are the tools of connection.

Before joining, this sailor was captivated by the work of Navy Imagery Specialists—especially Chief Petty Officer Helen Frank, whose images aboard HMAS Canberra in 2016 sparked a dream. Today, those mentors remain colleagues, guiding and challenging the next generation. Their influence is felt in every frame, every composition, every moment captured.

'My education comes from everywhere—senior mentors, social media, and global photographers. Experimentation is key. Some shots fail. Others succeed. But every attempt is a step forward.'

'The most important lesson is that lighting matters and in Defence photography, time is tight. Taking a moment to set up the shot properly is worth more than any post-edit fix,' he said.

'Photography isn't just technical—it's emotional.'

A favourite frame that stands out is HMAS Sirius conducting a dual Replenishment at Sea with HMAS Canberra and HMAS Anzac during Indo-Pacific Endeavour 21.

'The sun dipped low. The crew worked in harmony. International partners stood shoulder to shoulder. And on the bridge wing, a sense of calm settled in. It was history, teamwork, and beauty—captured in a single frame.'

'Photography isn't just technical—it's emotional. To get the shot, this sailor starts by understanding the subject. A quick chat. A relaxed pose. A moment of trust. That's how authenticity is captured. The goal? To tell stories that resonate. To preserve emotion, meaning, and memory. Every photo becomes a reminder:

I was there. I met those people. I was part of something extraordinary,' Sittichai said.

'If you want to take more interesting photos, put yourself in front of more interesting things.'

'Not every assignment goes smoothly. Tri-service tasking brings unfamiliar environments and unexpected challenges. But with adaptability comes growth. Each tough moment is a chance to learn, to stretch, to step beyond the comfort zone.'

'And through it all, the team stands strong—supportive, skilled, and united. Imagery Specialists operate across Navy, Army, and Air Force domains—flexibility is mission-critical.'

'When I take a photograph, I want, as best as I can, to tell a story. Sometimes the subject tells the story on its own, like a ship at sea. If you want to take more interesting photos, put yourself in front of more interesting things,' he suggested.





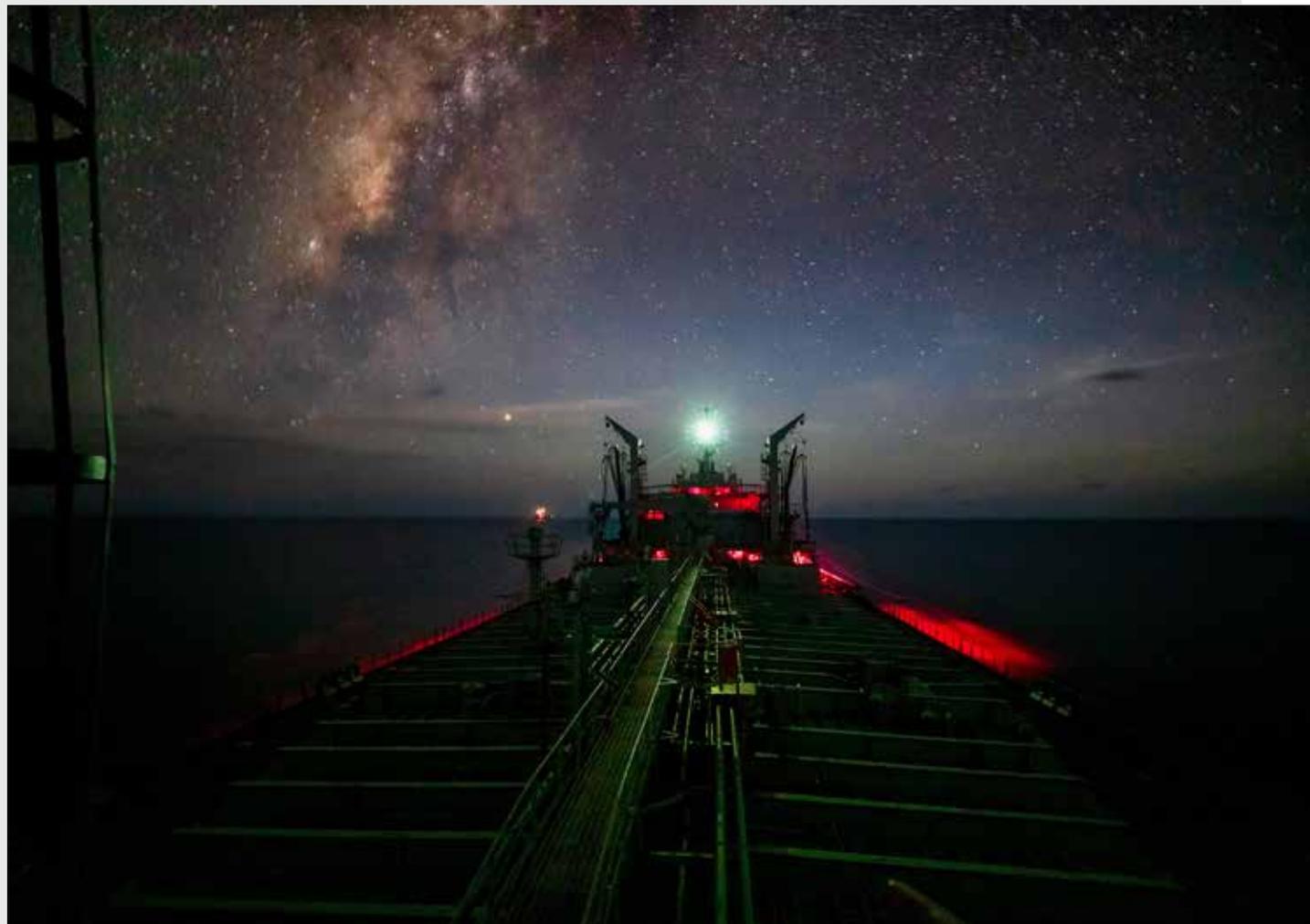
Royal Australian Navy Boatswain's Mates from HMAS Arunta conduct a 12.7mm machine gun live-fire serial during Exercise MILAN 2022.

During Exercise MILAN 2022, HMAS *Arunta* conducted a live-fire serial with a 12.7mm machine gun. One of the challenges I faced was shooting in backlighting conditions, where flash use was not permitted. Using a high shutter speed meant losing even more light, and I felt nervous about the possibility of missing the bullets in action while still maintaining proper exposure for both the subject and the background. The loud bangs added to my anxiety, but the stunning sunset and the calm sea helped ease my nerves. In the end, I felt excited and grateful to be part of the exercise, while also witnessing such a beautiful sunset.



HMAS *Sirius* sails under the Milky Way during Indo-Pacific Endeavour 21.

One of the most memorable moments I've had was capturing an image of HMAS *Sirius* beneath the Milky Way. I was at the front of the ship, with my Public Affairs Officer, helping to block the wind. It was incredibly challenging—windy, dark, and on a moving platform—there was no way to keep everything stable during the 10-15 second long exposure. Despite the difficulties, I was in awe of the stunning Milky Way overhead—something I rarely get to see in everyday life. My colleague and I stood silently, fully appreciating the view. No matter how the waves rocked the ship side to side, my mind was completely at peace in that moment.





HMAS *Sirius* conducts a dual Replenishment at Sea with HMA Ships *Canberra* and *Anzac* during Indo-Pacific Endeavour 21.

During Indo-Pacific Endeavour 21, HMAS *Sirius* conducted a dual Replenishment at Sea with HMAS *Canberra* and HMAS *Anzac*. Photographing this evolution was part of my daily tasks, and alongside my colleague I captured what I needed as the sun set. Afterwards, I took the chance to chat with international crew members from the Philippine Navy. Then, just after sunset, the sky transformed into one of the most beautiful twilights I had ever witnessed. The starboard bridge wing quickly filled with our crew and international partnership, all eager to record and experience the replenishment at sea with the stunning backdrop. I picked up my camera again, but this time the challenge was different—as the light faded, I needed to adjust for long exposure and experiment with various settings. Despite the technical demands, I found myself enjoying the moment, appreciating not only the photography but also the beauty of nature at sea. The next day, some of the images I captured were featured on ABC News, which made the experience even more rewarding.



Royal Australian Navy sailors from HMAS *Arunta* practise conducting a forward transfer with the ship's MH-60R Seahawk helicopter while sailing home to Sydney, after completing a successful Indo-Pacific regional presence deployment.

Royal Australian Navy sailors from HMAS *Arunta* practised a forward transfer with the ship's MH-60R Seahawk helicopter while sailing home to Sydney, after completing a successful Indo-Pacific regional presence deployment. I remember how challenging it was standing on the starboard bridge wing that rainy, windy day — water kept splashing onto my lens, my clothes were soaked, and yet I felt privileged to witness the sailors performing their duties with such professionalism. Watching the storm roll in while observing the transfer was both intense and unforgettable. I was so excited to see this evolution for the first time — it was truly amazing.



Royal Australian Navy Boatswain's Mates from HMAS *Arunta* conduct training on a 12.7mm machine gun using a flare target during their regional presence deployment.

One of my most challenging nights for photography was during HMAS *Arunta*'s training on a 12.7 mm machine gun, using a flare target as part of Regional Presence Deployment 22. It was my first time photographing a live gun shoot at night — I was both nervous and excited. The loud bang went off right next to me, and I had to focus on the subject with only a single red light as my guide. Surrounded by noise and intensity, I felt strangely peaceful, completely absorbed in capturing the perfect shot. It was inspiring to see the Navy personnel working with such professionalism and precision, all focused on one target.



HMAS *Brisbane* ship's company standing at Procedure Alpha, entering San Francisco Bay.

Back in 2019, during HMAS *Brisbane*'s entry into San Francisco Bay for Procedure Alpha, I was serving as a Maritime Logistic Support Operations (Steward). Alongside that, I had the privilege of taking on the additional role of a ship's photographer.

It was an unforgettable moment—walking around the decks, capturing photos as we passed beneath the world-famous Golden Gate Bridge. It was also my very first time in the United States, and the excitement was shared by everyone on board. I chatted with crew members as I moved around, and you could feel the pride and energy in the air.

Looking back, I'm proud to have been part of the commissioning crew and even prouder of the choice I made to join the Navy. It truly was one of the greatest experiences of my life.



Maritime Logistics-Chef Leading Seaman George Klimis in the galley on board HMAS *Adelaide* during Exercise SEA WADER 2020. ** This image has been digitally altered **

Back in 2019, during HMAS *Brisbane*'s entry into San Francisco Bay for Procedure Alpha, I was serving as a Maritime Logistic Support Operations (Steward). Alongside that, I had the privilege of taking on the additional role of a ship's photographer.





Royal Australian Navy Boatswain's Mates from HMAS Arunta conduct a 12.7mm machine gun live-fire serial during Exercise MILAN 2022.

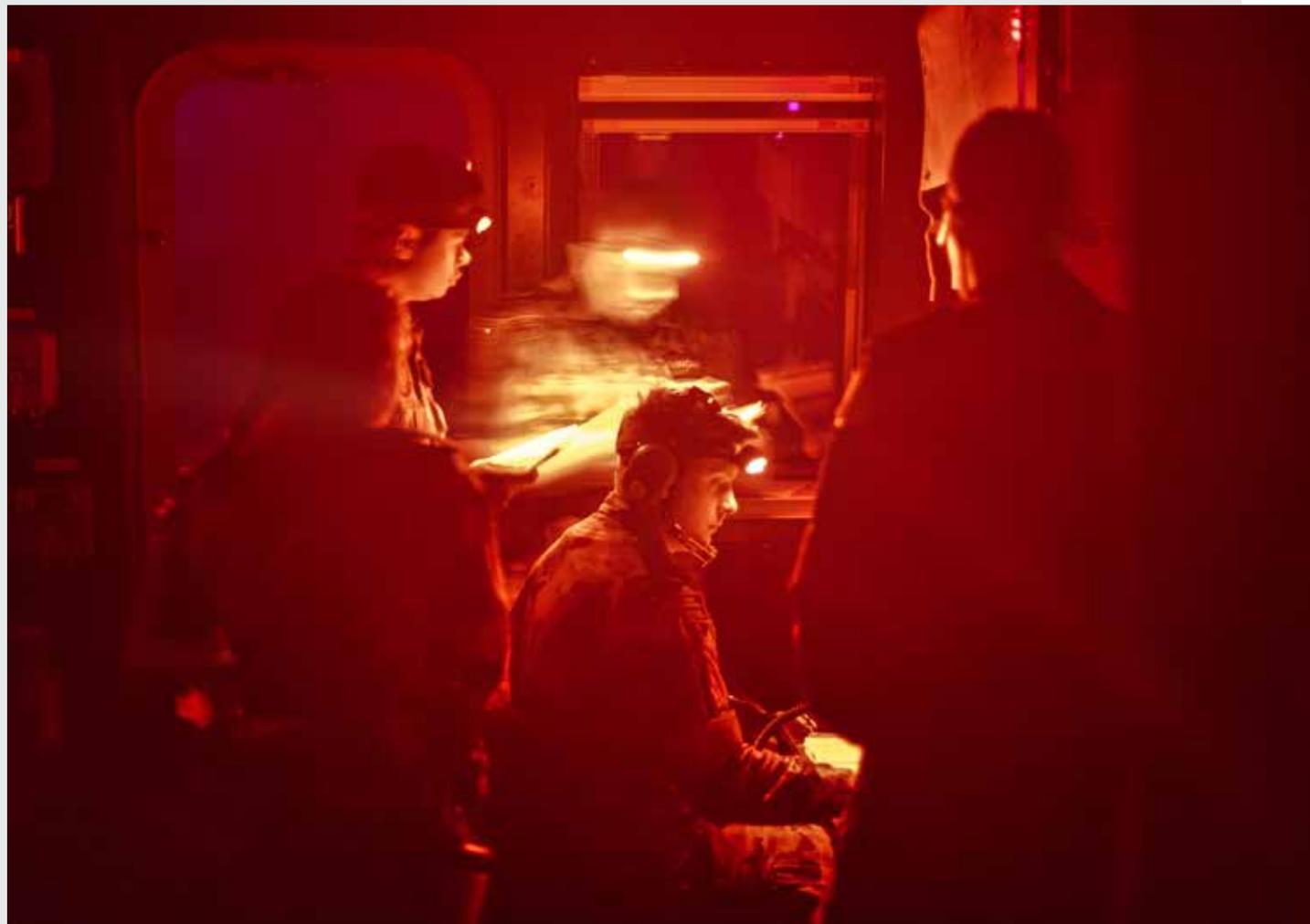
During Exercise MILAN 2022 onboard HMAS Arunta, I had the privilege of witnessing a 12.7 mm machine gun live-fire serial up close. Capturing the moment with my camera was a challenge — the flash of gunfire is so quick that it's nearly impossible to freeze perfectly in a single frame. On top of that, I was restricted to one position. But being in that spot, so close to the action, felt like a rare privilege. Watching the Navy Boatswain's Mates working seamlessly together with precision and teamwork was impressive in itself. As the sun set and the light faded, the atmosphere became even more unforgettable. Looking back now, I realise how special that moment truly was — not just as a photographer, but as someone lucky enough to witness it firsthand.





Seaman Communications Information Systems Travis Mathews on the bridge of HMAS *Canberra* during activities with the Republic of Singapore Navy while on Indo-Pacific Endeavour 21.

During Indo-Pacific Endeavour 21, I was tasked with filming the Communication Information Systems crew members as they conducted the first communications with the Republic of Singapore Navy on the bridge of HMAS *Canberra*. The space was dark and crowded, which made capturing the moment challenging. When I saw an opportunity for a strong image, I quickly switched from video to stills mode and set up a long exposure shot using my tripod. I aimed to capture the subject holding still, while allowing the surrounding movement to bring the image to life. What I enjoy most about these moments is seeing how other departments operate. It reminds me that while each team has its own responsibilities, we are all working toward the same goal—keeping the ship moving forward as one. This is what makes me love my job: having the opportunity to step outside my own area of work, observe others in action, and capture it through imagery.





General Entry 435 Shipp Division marches on the parade ground during their graduation ceremony held at Royal Australian Navy Recruit School, HMAS Cerberus, Victoria.

One of my favourite photos from the Recruit School graduation came with a real challenge: capturing a daylight long exposure while shooting handheld. It was a risky experiment — I only had one chance during each ceremony, and I failed in two out of four graduations. But that's what made the successful shots so rewarding. It wasn't just the thrill of pushing myself as a photographer that made this image special. What I truly loved was capturing the enthusiasm in the eyes of the recruits, full of excitement and ready to begin their adventures. Every visit to the Recruit School brings back strong memories for me. I remember the first day when the bus arrived, the meals I shared with others, waking up early for morning activities, and the shouts of encouragement from the physical instructors telling me, "You can do it!" Those moments shaped me, and this photo is a reminder of how far I've come.



05.



**Leading Seaman Imagery Specialist
Rikki-Lea Phillips**

*Hanging out of helicopters,
holding onto purpose*

Rikki-Lea never imagined the Navy would become home. After high school she fled Australia's humidity for the snow-dusted streets of Canada, working whatever odd jobs she could find. When she returned, she felt directionless. Her best mate had just enlisted and nudged her toward the idea. She didn't overthink it. Maybe this is what I need, she thought. She was right.

The Gold Coast will always be stitched into her bones—its heat, its beaches, her family. But Western Australia is where she feels grounded. The quiet, the space, the endless stretch of turquoise water—it all settles her. Even off duty, the sunsets tempt her to lift her camera.

Her family cheers her from afar. Thor, her beloved dog, misses her in a way only animals can. He rotates between friends when she's away, but each of those friends has stepped up. "He's got a little tribe now," she smiles. "Just like I do."

Before the uniform, she worked behind counters. Now, behind the lens, she's travelled farther than she ever imagined: India, Indonesia, Fiji, Singapore, Hawaii. Hawaii holds her heart. Her best friend lives there, and seeing her during a deployment was a reminder of how connection anchors her in this life that moves so fast.

She carries a familiar fear—the fear of missing the moment. But she also carries the determination to honour it.

"Being an Imagery Specialist means witnessing the ADF from every angle. Every face. Every feeling. A single photo can hold so much. It can be a message. A memory. A legacy."

Sometimes the pressure sits heavy. She has nights where she lies awake wondering whether she captured the truth—whether her images will resonate with the people who lived the moment.

Technology has changed the job. Drones thrill her; they open the sky. But AI unsettles her. She worries it could cheapen what's real.

"Photography is presence," she says softly. "It's heart. It's being there. AI can't feel what we feel."

When things get tough, she finds the sun. A quiet patch of sky. A moment to breathe before diving back in.

Routine steadies her. PT in the mornings. Conversations with friends. A rhythm that drowns out the noise. But the job asks for flexibility—one minute she's planning a weekend, the next she's on a ship for three months.

She laughs when describing her hobbies: "If it scares me, I'll probably try it." Snorkelling, skiing, snowboarding—anything that pushes her forward. Photography is the same; she learns by doing, absorbing feedback "like sunlight."

Petty Officer Craig Walton has been her biggest challenger and her strongest supporter. His tough love sharpened her eye. "One day he wants me to take his place," she says. "That's a legacy worth chasing."

Her favourite photograph is one of Australian Army soldiers with a CH-47 Chinook behind them—dust swirling, the moment suspended between chaos and calm.

"That's what I'm chasing. A feeling."

In the end, she wants her photos to speak for themselves.

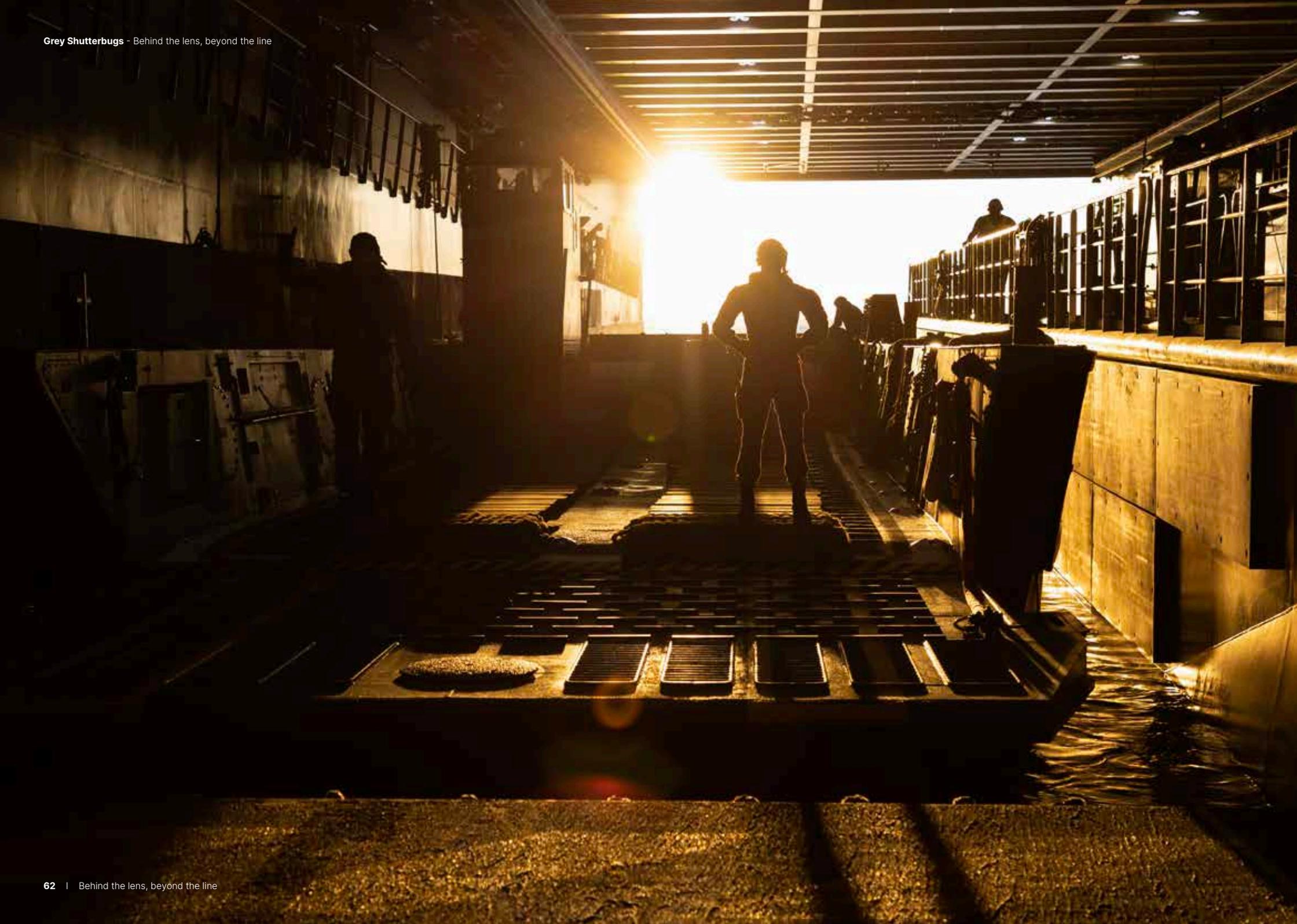
"To say: This happened. These people were here. This mattered."



Chief Petty Officer Aviation Technician Aircraft Stewart Crombie marshals for an MH-60R Seahawk helicopter on the flight deck of HMAS *Choules* during the first-of-class flight trials off the coast of Queensland.

The sun was setting while Flight 7 MH-60R Seahawk helicopter was conducting deck landings as part of flight trials on HMAS *Choules* and I wanted to try something different to try and get the colours of the sky, stars and the aircraft exposed. So I grabbed my tripod and had the shutter on 1 second. The hard part was making sure that I held the tripod down so it didn't move while on the flight deck with the rotor wash but it was fun to play with the different settings. This image was taken during my first four weeks at sea as an Imagery Specialist as part of my Capability Evidence Journal.







HMAS *Adelaide* personnel onboard a Light Landing Craft as it departs the ship's welldock at sunset during Exercise SEA EXPLORER 23.

This image was taken during Exercise SEA EXPLORER and it had already been a big day. I had been on the flight deck, in a CH-47 Chinook and then down in the Welldock of HMAS *Adelaide* for sunset. I was lucky to be in the right place at the right time as the sun shone right through the dock as a Light Landing Craft was departing and the sailor stood in the perfect spot. Things work out great when the stars (or sun) align perfectly.



Able Seaman Boatswain's Mate Brea Argent in a Rigid Hull Inflatable Boat while HMAS *Stuart* is at anchor in Sydney Harbour before sailing for a Pacific deployment.

Capturing this image of Able Seaman Brea Argent was easy as I am friends with her, so the moment I called out to her, she put on a big grin for me. I love all the different tones of greys and blues within this image. I think it's a simple but lovely image of her. I did tell Brea not to be surprised if she had seen it go places and she said that she has been sent it a few times on Instagram and being published on ADF pages. It is nice to know when your imagery goes far and wide.







An Australian Army CH-47 Chinook departs the Shoalwater Bay training area after delivering a M777A2 Howitzer during Exercise TALISMAN SABRE 23.

Petty Officer Craig Walton and I were tasked to capture an M777A2 Howitzer being dropped off at Shoalwater Bay training area by a CH 47 Chinook. This day was such a fun day, we were dropped off by a Chinook, to capture the next Chinook drop offs the weapons and ammunition being prepared and then depart on the last Chinook of the day. We stuck with the team that were dropped off with us, got blasted by the downwash, almost got left out field for the night, captured some banger images and made it back to the ship covered in dirt I just remember getting back and laughing at Craig with so much dirt on his face and in the end I captured my favourite image to date.



HMAS *Stuart* sailor Seaman Boatswain's Mate Shoshana Olson engages with kids at Missionary Infant School, Samoa during a Pacific Deployment.

HMAS *Stuart* pulled into Samoa and the crew went to a few different local places to help with various maintenance. In this case, I went to Missionary Infant School where the crew helped clean out some gutters, paint and most importantly, engage with the kids. Able Seaman Shoshona Olsen was extremely excited to interact with the kids she had been throwing the ball and running around with them all morning. Able Seaman Olsen had finally sat down for a quick rest when I captured this image. I had been trying to get a nice photo of her all morning. I love the chaos of kids around her with that big grin as it just says it all. Able Seaman Olsen said it was her favourite day of the trip and I am glad I was able to capture the emotion from that day.





Leading Seaman Aircrewman Anthony Hunt and swimmer Able Seaman Electronic Warfare Matt Turnbull in lifting strops are winched into an MH-60R Seahawk as part of a Search and Rescue exercise during HMAS Stuart's Pacific Deployment.

Flight 7 with their MH-60R Seahawk helicopter conducted a Search and Rescue exercise whilst on a deployment with HMAS Stuart and the day that they conducted this exercise the sea had gotten bigger and I honestly expected them to cancel it for a calmer day. It was tough being out on the RHIB (Rigid Hull Inflatable Boat) in the rough sea it was hard to see the swimmer at times especially with the downwash from the aircraft. Trying to hold on, make sure my second camera didn't get bashed around and trying not to get the camera equipment drenched was a task on its own. I still had to hold the camera steady to actually capture what was happening in the frame and having a slow enough shutter to be able to see rotor blur when capturing the aircraft was harder than expected. There were a few shots from this day that I love and it was hard to pick my favourite although I like all the mist around Leading Seaman Anthony Hunt and the member being rescued, the way it swarms them, yet they are still so clear. I also really enjoy the contrast of the bright colours against the blue sea. Even though the next day it felt like I had been hit by a truck after getting bounced around in the RHIB, I still had so much fun being out there and it makes you really appreciate the things the Aircrew and Flight go through to prepare for this kind of evolution.



Leading Seaman Physical Training Instructor Dominic Morris observes Able Seaman Aviation Technician Aiden Baker conduct battle rope double arms as part of a Fitness Fiesta Challenge on the Flight Deck of HMAS *Stuart* during the ship's regional presence deployment.

HMAS *Stuart* held a Fitness Fiesta competition and it was quite a challenging fitness workout which included exercises like Kettlebell swings, pushups, lunges, battle ropes, burpees and more. I wanted to try and capture the exercises to show the challenge but to have a bit of artistic flair within the image. I like this image the most because the lines of the battle ropes bounce your eyes through the image to Able Seaman Aiden Baker and then to the Physical Training Instructor, Leading Seaman Dominic Morris. The challenge for me to capture this image was getting the ropes in the right spot so that they didn't cover Able Seaman Baker's face I took a lot of photos to get this one image.



Royal Australian Navy sailor Petty Officer Maritime Logistics Chef Troy Wenman serves appetisers during an official reception on the flight deck of HMAS *Stuart* as part of Exercise MALABAR 24 while the ship is alongside Visakhapatnam, India during the ship's regional presence deployment.

HMAS *Stuart* had an Official Reception on board whilst the ship was alongside in India for Exercise MALABAR 2024. It was quite dark, even with the fairy lights on the flight deck so I chose to use an on camera flash and I don't particularly love on camera flash although I think it works for this image. While I captured a few images of *Stuart's* sailors serving the food, none of them compares to the way this worked out for me. The two Officers chatting just a perfect distance away to look through them and the other two Officers grabbing food right as Petty Officer Maritime Logistics Chef Troy Wenman looks up with a big smile. It is almost a symmetrical image with a foreground that draws you into Petty Officer Wenman but not too much where it draws the attention away.



Australian Army Light Amphibious Resupply Craft transports soldiers from HMAS Adelaide to the beach during Exercise KERIS WOOMERA 2024, Indonesia.

I was deployed on HMAS *Stuart* and was in company with HMAS *Adelaide* and the Australian Amphibious Force to participate in Exercise KERIS WOOMERA 2024 held in Indonesia. The Imagery Specialists onboard *Adelaide* needed an extra hand for a week in so I cross decked to lend a hand. I was going ashore on an Australian Army Light Amphibious Resupply Craft turned around and saw another LARC cruising in front of *Adelaide* with Light Landing Crafts in the background. I believe it is the contrast of the Army colours against the blue and grey and the compression from utilising 200mm that make this image. I was also told by an Australian Army officer that this photo was the best LARC photo he had ever seen which was a shock and a really good feeling.



An Australian Army soldier guards the cenotaph as part of the catafalque party during the Anzac Day 2025 dawn service at Mt Clarence in Albany, Western Australia.

Anzac Day for 2025 was spent in Albany, and I was awake getting ready about 0100 to be at Mt Clarence by 0300 to get a car park prior to the Dawn Service starting. It was a very packed Dawn Service with not much room to move to capture imagery. During the welcoming of the Dawn Service, the RSL member advised that the ANZACs had endured cold and wet weather, and to be aware that Mt Clarence was due to rain and to be prepared to stand through the weather just as they did. My short height came in handy during this photo as I could just see over the wall, and I could slightly see the Australian Army soldier's reflection as he guarded the Cenotaph as part of the Catafalque Party. With the reflection of the soldier, the way the light hit him and the rain just tied the image all together, I believe the image wouldn't have the same effect and feeling if it wasn't raining noting that this weather is what the ANZACs dealt with during war.



06.



**Leading Seaman Imagery Specialist
Daniel Goodman**

From Dreamworld to deck plates

'I was seventeen, standing on a rugby pitch on the Gold Coast, chasing a dream that didn't quite fit my frame. My heart was in the game, but my build—courtesy of Dad—wasn't built for 100kg blokes charging full tilt. A few mates were heading into the Navy, and after a backpacking stint through Asia (which I swore I'd never revisit), I stumbled across the Boatswain's Mate role in the Royal Australian Navy. It spoke to me. Loudly. One year later, in March 2016, I was in uniform.'

'Gold Coast, Queensland. That's home. My family roots stretch back to Christchurch, New Zealand, but my parents saw the light—literally. The warm glow of summer, the beaches, the vibe. I was born there in '94, and no matter where the Navy sends me, the Goldie is stitched into my DNA,' Daniel said.

Before the Navy, he was flipping burgers at Big Chief and pouring coffees at Dreamworld. He earned a Certificate IV in Hospitality and worked events, including function nights at the Big Brother house. It was chaotic, caffeinated, and character-building. That hustle taught him how to handle pressure—skills he'd later lean on in uniform.

'Seeing comments from families while their loved ones are deployed reminds me why I do this.'

'We're the kind of family that can go four months without talking and pick up like it was yesterday. That's lucky, because I've been deployable for eight of my ten years in service. Their quiet strength and understanding have been my anchor.'

When I'm not behind the camera, I'm chasing birdies—not the feathered kind, but the ones on the green. Golf is my sport of choice these days. Unlike rugby, no one's trying to rearrange my ribcage. The only thing charging at me is a rogue tee shot or a wayward cart. Rugby League still holds a place in my heart, especially watching the Brisbane Broncos take out the 2025 premiership. But photography? That's the hobby that became a mission,' he said.

'The locations are stunning, sure—but it's the people who make the memories stick.'

Daniel admits that in a world where a two-second scroll decides whether your video lives or dies, staying sharp is non-negotiable. Cameras are everywhere. Tech evolves fast.

'Being an Imagery Specialist means constantly levelling up—not just to be good, but to be seen. Being an Imagery Specialist in the Navy is surreal. Some days I have to pinch myself—this is work? Capturing joy, connection, and legacy through imagery and video is a privilege. Seeing comments from families while their loved ones are deployed reminds me why I do this.'

'We're a tight crew—only about 40 of us in the Royal Australian Navy—and the output we deliver is nothing short of phenomenal. It's not just a job. It's a calling.'

'Turns out, the Navy loves Asia. So much for 'never going back.' I've travelled to Vietnam, South Korea, Japan, and the USA, among others. Each trip is shaped by the crew you're with. The locations are stunning, sure—but it's the people who make the memories stick. Eighty per cent of our work happens behind closed doors - no fanfare. No spotlight,' he said.

When it gets tough—physically, mentally—Daniel reminds myself: that he joined the Navy, not the Army. No matter how long the day, there's always a single bed waiting. Not comfy, but his. Tomorrow's a new challenge.

Anzac Day coverage always hits different. But 2024 was something else for him.

'I was the Imagery Specialist for all three first-of-class firings: the Naval Strike Missile, the Standard Missile 6, and the Tomahawk Weapon System. That year, I didn't just document history—I helped shape how it's remembered.'

'Emotion, composition, story—all wrapped into a single frame.'

'Tech's evolving fast. Social media is both a bridge and a battleground. We're squeezing cinematic frames into vertical scrolls. AI and drones have their place, sure—but nothing beats the human eye, the instinct, the touch. That's where the magic lives. Videography is slowly taking over my life—in the best way. Whether it's crafting a punchy Instagram Reel or building a short-form documentary, I'm obsessed with the art of making something feel.'

'I study creators like Danny Gevirtz and Elliot Sauvage, absorbing their techniques and pushing myself to think differently. It's not just about capturing moments—it's about creating meaning,' said Daniel.

He advised that Imagery Specialist stepping into the role for the first time must buckle up to the best job in Defence, hands down. But it's not just about pressing buttons—it's about pressure, presence, and purpose.

'You're the Subject Matter Expert on the front lines of history. Enjoy the highs, roll with the lows, and remember: life could be much worse. You get to tell the story of our people. That's a privilege. Anyone can take a photo. But an Imagery Specialist? We craft images that speak. Emotion, composition, story—all wrapped into a single frame. That's the difference. That's the standard,' he said.

'If you've got an eye for detail and a heart for storytelling, you're already halfway there.'

Daniel says that he owes a lot to the legends who shaped him early on. Leading Seaman Imagery Specialist Kieran Dempsey, Chief Petty Officer Imagery Specialist Andrew Dakin, and Warrant Officer Ricky Fuller didn't just teach him photography—they taught him how to chase excellence. Their voices echo in his mind every time he lines up a shot: "Make it better. Make it count."

Photography is a beast that never stops evolving. Staying current with tech and technique is non-negotiable. But the real joy for him is teaching.

'Helping junior photographers avoid the mistakes I made, guiding them to find their own voice, their own style. That's legacy work.'

'My favourite frame is the one that made someone feel something. That's the goal every time.'

'Before I lift the camera, I connect. I joke. I listen.'

'I forget the noise and don't stress about what others think. If you've got an eye for detail and a heart for storytelling, you're already halfway there. Be ruthlessly professional when it counts, and have fun when you can. Shoot what you love—others will love it too.'

'Chief Petty Officer Andrew Dakin's deployed imagery is a masterclass. It's why I've stayed deployable for over eight years. Out there, in the thick of it—that's where the magic happens. That's where the best images live. Being loud and extroverted helps. But it's not just about energy—it's about empathy.'

'Before I lift the camera, I connect. I joke. I listen. That trust translates into the image. That's how you get the shot and the soul. I want my photos to punch through the screen. Bright, bold, emotional. I want viewers to feel like they were right there beside me—on the deck, in the moment, part of the story. That's the power of proximity. That's the power of purpose.'

'I'll never forget the people who took a chance on me—who saw something in a guy with no formal photography experience and gave him a shot. I hope my work ethic, attitude, and values have repaid that faith. Being an Imagery Specialist isn't just a job. It's a gift,' he said.'



Royal Australian Navy officer Lieutenant Commander Makaila Lasalo (right) talks with Nomuka Island residents during Operation TONGA ASSIST 2022.

This image was taken in the wake of the tsunami that hit Tonga in 2022 while I was onboard HMAS *Canberra* assigned to Operation TONGA ASSIST. On one of the days when I visited the islands, Australian Army and Royal Australian Navy personnel were delivering supplies and setting up tents for the affected locals. As I turned around, I noticed a Navy officer talking to this young girl and her mother. As I raised the camera to my eye, the little girl looked up to the officer with the sweetest, heart-warming smile – this was one of the first images in my career I truly loved, given the circumstances.





United States Marines run to a vantage point as a paratrooper from the Malaysian Army keeps watch during a simulated urban close combat scenario on Exercise Rim of the Pacific (RIMPAC) 2022.

During my career, I've had the pleasure of taking part in three RIMPAC exercises off the coast of Hawaii. This was the second time and first as an Imagery Specialist. I was lucky enough to be invited to take images of Australian Army soldiers, United States Marines and Malaysian Army paratroopers conducting a close combat scenario training. Though this was just an exercise, the sounds of small explosives and blank ammunition felt like I was on a battlefield. As I was crouched against a wall, I noticed a paratrooper taking cover, with Marines running from one side of the field to the other in order to take shelter with him. With the next wave of marines running across, I quickly lowered my shutter speed to 1/13th of a second to create movement in the shot and capture the moment of chaos.



Able Seaman Maritime Logistics - Support Operations Cavan McAlister, Able Seaman Electronics Technician Addison Tabakovic and Able Seaman Electronics Technician Andrew Minter fight a simulated fire in the diesel generator room on board HMAS Hobart during a damage control exercise as part of Exercise KEEN SWORD 2022.

Before becoming an Imagery Specialist, I had never seen imagery that was 'super creative' in nature when it comes to damage control exercises. The thought of fighting a real fire at sea is terrifying, and I wanted to create imagery to link that, and that had been my goal before the deployment began. I placed an orange cap on my flash, making sure the smoke machine and sailors fighting the fire were between me and the flash. I wanted the orange glow of the flash to light up the smoke and bounce around the equipment in the room like a real fire would. This was the first time I ever tried this technique, and I have been enhancing it and teaching other photographers this style ever since.





Leading Seaman Combat Systems Operator Khory Beezley and a Baniyala and Garrangali school student during a beach sports day as part of an Indigenous Immersion event in Baniyala, Northern Territory.

The Navy immersion activity at Baniyala, East Arnhem, in the Northern Territory was my first exposure to an indigenous community. Leading Seaman David Cox and I had the pleasure of not just being welcomed but also being included like family in all of the events during the week. On one of the last days of the trip, our Navy people and the members of the community walked down to the beach to conduct sporting activities such as a tug-of-war and beach volleyball. The interaction between the indigenous children and our people was so genuine, and I had the pleasure of capturing the joy of this moment.



HMAS *Brisbane* ship's company commemorate Remembrance Day as the ship sails in the East Philippine Sea during ANNUALEX 2023.

One of the more solemn days on our calendar, and I was deployed on HMAS *Brisbane* for Remembrance Day in 2023. I was lucky enough to have the wind on my side, making it possible to capture the ship's company, the ceremonial guard and the Australian White Ensign all in one shot, with the weather and cloudy skies only adding to the emotion of the image.







HMAS Sydney berthed alongside Joint Base Pearl Harbor-Hickam, Hawaii, during Exercise Rim of the Pacific (RIMPAC) 2024

2024 was my busiest year as an Imagery Specialist, with almost six months spent away from home. During our regional presence deployment, in which we also participated in RIMPAC, we were berthed at one of the quieter berths alongside Pearl Harbor. I thought it would be a wonderful time for a long exposure image, noting there were minimal clouds in the sky.



HMAS Sydney's embarked MH-60R helicopter "Phoenix" fires its Counter Measure Defence System (CMDS) during flying operations while the ship is deployed on a regional presence deployment.

Approximately an hour before this image was taken, I was in the junior sailors' café asking if anyone was heading up to watch the Counter Measure Defence System (CMDS) firing. I was shocked when the majority of people either didn't know what it was or weren't going up to watch it. After some convincing, I managed to swindle 50 or so to enjoy what was about to happen. After getting this video cleared, it was published on the Royal Australian Navy Facebook page and has become the most-watched video on the platform with over 3.8 million views and counting.





HMAS Sydney sails through the Yellow Sea in rough weather during a Regional Presence Deployment.

Those who have served on a guided-missile destroyer before generally know, for the most part, that the warships ride the seas very well compared to a helicopter frigate. More often than not, it is quite difficult to get very large waves crashing over the bow due to its design. This morning, the ship was shaking and I was almost thrown out of my rack. I quickly grabbed my camera and headed up to the bridge, where I spent the next two hours waiting for the perfect wave to smash into the bow of HMAS *Brisbane*.



An Australian Army soldier has a moment of reflection at an Australian Defence Force-led memorial service at Bomana Cemetery during the Papua New Guinea Defence Force week in Port Moresby.

During Operation WANTAIM in Papua New Guinea, I had the privilege of attending an Australian Defence Force-led memorial service at Bomana War Cemetery. Visiting this cemetery was truly humbling and was a highlight of the operation for everyone who attended. I noticed this Army soldier observing headstones and, with the beautiful scenery in the distance behind him, snapped this shot before the ceremony began. It is moments like this that I love my job.





HMAS Sydney's Rigid Hull Inflatable Boat (RHIB) returns to the ship after conducting a night man overboard during Exercise PACIFIC DRAGON 2024.

Being an ex-Boatswain's Mate, some of my core memories in the Navy involve driving the Rigid Hull Inflatable Boat (RHIB) on HMAS *Melbourne*. Now that I'm a photographer, showcasing the skill of our sailors driving in rough conditions or in this image, at night, always makes for a great image.



07.



**Leading Seaman Imagery Specialist
Matthew Lyall**

*Anchored by family,
driven by story*

Growing up in rural Tasmania, the world beyond the Coal River Valley felt impossibly vast—and irresistibly inviting. Campania, with its rolling hills and close-knit community, shaped his values and sparked a lifelong curiosity. But it was the promise of travel, purpose, and service that drew Matthew to the Royal Australian Navy.

Before enlisting, Matthew trained as a chef in Hobart—precision, pressure, and craftsmanship were his daily bread. That discipline carried seamlessly into his first Navy role as a Maritime Logistics - Chef. Eventually, he traded the kitchen for the camera, becoming an Imagery Specialist with a new mission: to capture the soul of service.

He says that behind every deployment is a support crew that doesn't wear uniforms. His wife, Akiko and kids, Archie and Aurora, are his anchor. His parents and in-laws form the foundation that lets him serve with focus and heart. They don't just endure the distance—they fuel the mission.

'Off-duty, I'm a die-hard Essendon Bombers fan (yes, it builds character), a cricket tragic, and a coin collector. Each coin is a pocket-sized memory from the places I've served—a tangible link to history and culture.

'To grow as an Imagery Specialist, I study the greats, debate with peers, and chase the kind of shots that stir something deeper. It's not just about technical skill—it's about emotional truth. Because in the end, the best images don't just show what happened. They show what it meant.

When the going gets tough, I zoom in—literally and mentally. I focus on the next day, the next shoot, the next task. Naval life teaches you to break down the big picture into manageable frames. Purpose keeps the isolation at bay,' he said.

'In uncertain times, our stories matter more than ever.'

Matthew concedes that he documents history in real time and every image he takes is a thread in the Navy's visual legacy—a moment that might one day help future sailors, historians, or families understand what we lived through and stood for.

'Whether it's a high-tempo operation or a quiet exchange on the mess deck, I aim to preserve the emotion, the grit, and the humanity behind the uniform.

'The job isn't without its challenges. Global tensions shift fast, and so does imaging technology. Staying sharp means constant learning, adapting, and pushing beyond the comfort zone. But that's part of the thrill. In uncertain times, our stories matter more than ever.

'Being an Imagery Specialist means more than taking photos—it means honouring the experience, capturing the truth, and leaving behind a legacy that speaks louder than words,' he said.

From the Serengeti's sweeping plains to the ancient souks of Oman, his camera has followed him across continents—but it's the Pacific that's left the deepest imprint. Nauru, Samoa, Tonga, PNG, Fiji, Solomon Islands—each place offered not just beauty, but connection. The real magic lies in the people: their stories, their resilience, their warmth. That's what he aims to capture.

One assignment that truly tested and rewarded him was Operation VANUATU ASSIST 2023. After twin cyclones devastated the region, the Navy delivered aid to remote communities. Matthew documented recovery, resilience, and raw humanity in places few cameras reach. It was everything he signed up for: challenge, impact, and the privilege of telling stories that matter.

'Because in the end, the best images don't just show what happened. They show what it meant.'

'Technology is evolving fast—AI, drones, social media—but I see it as expansion, not disruption. These tools amplify our reach and refine our craft. They don't replace storytelling; they enhance it.'

'The trick is staying sharp, staying curious, and never losing sight of the human element. But gear and technique only get you so far. The real edge is storytelling. You need a deep, genuine drive to document human experience. Whether it's a high-stakes operation or a quiet moment between shipmates, there's always a story worth telling. That instinct—to see beyond the surface and capture the soul of a moment—is what separates good photographers from great ones.'

'I learned that lesson not from a camera crew, but from a galley team. During a nine-month deployment aboard HMAS *Warramunga*, my chef team set the bar for excellence. We pushed each other, supported each other, and held ourselves to the highest standards. That culture of care, detail, and resilience shaped how I approach every assignment—even now, as an Imagery Specialist,' said Matthew.

To keep growing, he studies the legends, dives into online tutorials, and attends courses that challenge his perspective. He suggests that photography is a craft that never stops evolving, and staying curious is non-negotiable. The goal isn't just technical mastery—it's creating images that resonate, that last, that matter.

'So if you're picking up the camera for the first time—shoot like it's the last shot.'

One deployment that truly delivered was Regional Presence Deployment 24-2 aboard HMAS *Hobart*.

'The crew was exceptional, and that energy translated into every frame. From operational action to quiet camaraderie, the images I captured told stories that went deeper than documentation. They reflected the spirit of the mission and the people behind it.

'That's the heart of the job: capturing not just what happened, but what it meant. So if you're picking up the camera for the first time—shoot like it's the last shot. Because the legacy you build starts now.'

'When I first started taking photos, I was obsessed with getting everything "just right"—the perfect light, the perfect angle, the perfect moment. But I've learned that perfection is a myth, and chasing it can stifle creativity. Some of the most powerful images come from the unexpected: a burst of emotion, a candid glance, a shadow that wasn't in the plan but tells the story better than anything else.'

'Photography, especially in the Navy, isn't about flawless execution—it's about being present. Naval life throws curveballs daily, and as an Imagery Specialist, you're often the only one there to capture history as it unfolds. You don't get retakes. You get real moments. And that's where the magic lives,' he said.

'In naval photography, I capture what unfolds—no matter the light, the weather, or the chaos.'

His approach has been shaped by legends like Frank Hurley, whose Antarctic images showed the human spirit under pressure, and Trent Parke, who finds poetry in the everyday. Their work taught Matthew to look deeper—to see not just what's happening, but why it matters.

Getting the shot isn't just technical - it's relational. You need to build trust with your subjects, especially in Defence. When people feel seen, not just photographed, they open up—and that's when the real story surfaces. It's not about posing; it's about presence.

'In my naval work, I aim for truth. These images are records of operations, of service, of sacrifice. They need clarity, honesty, and respect.'

'My personal photography, on the other hand, leans into emotion. Whether it's the vastness of the Serengeti or the quiet beauty of Tasmania, I want people to feel something when they look at my work. The contrast between these two worlds is stark.'

'In personal photography, I chase golden hour and plan every detail. In naval photography, I capture what unfolds—no matter the light, the weather, or the chaos. A sailor hugging their child doesn't wait for perfect conditions. And that moment, raw and real, is often more powerful than any staged shot.'

'So here's what I've learned: don't wait for perfect. Be ready for real. Because the best images aren't crafted—they're caught. And they remind us not just of what we did, but of who we were,' Matthew said.



A member of HMAS Canberra's ship's company fires a 25mm Typhoon gun during a live fire serial as the ship sails in the Pacific Ocean.

This image captures the raw power and intensity of naval gunnery training during a night firing exercise aboard HMAS Canberra. The composition places the viewer right in the heart of the action, with the sailor silhouetted against the brilliant muzzle flash and cascading sparks that illuminate the entire gun mount in golden light. The challenging low-light conditions required careful technical considerations to balance the extreme contrast between the bright flash and the surrounding darkness, whilst maintaining detail in both the equipment and the human element. What makes this image emotionally compelling is how it conveys the awesome capability of naval firepower whilst highlighting the professionalism and skill of the sailors operating these systems. The sparks radiating outward create a sense of controlled chaos, emphasising both the destructive potential and the precision required in naval gunnery. Being positioned close to the action allowed me to capture not just the technical aspects of the weapon system, but the human story of sailors mastering some of the most powerful equipment in the Navy.





Able Seaman Electronics Technician Joshua Gardiner (left), Able Seaman Boatswain's Mate Kendall Byrnes (centre) and Leading Seaman Boatswain's Mate Dean Gough conduct boarding party training onboard HMAS Hobart during a Regional Presence Deployment.

Captured during boarding party training aboard HMAS *Hobart*, this image documents the serious preparation that underpins naval security operations. The composition brings the viewer into the cramped confines of the ship's interior, where three sailors coordinate their movements in tactical formation. The challenging lighting conditions – typical of shipboard operations – required careful exposure control to maintain detail in both the personnel and their equipment whilst preserving the authentic atmosphere of the training environment. What strikes me about this image is how it captures the intense concentration and teamwork required for boarding operations, even during training scenarios. The sailors' coordinated positioning and professional bearing demonstrate the high standards maintained throughout all naval exercises. The confined space and industrial surroundings emphasise the reality that naval personnel must be prepared to operate effectively in any environment, turning every corner of the ship into a potential training ground for real-world operations.



Chief Petty Officer Electronic Warfare Supervisor Paul Winn with his child after HMAS Hobart arrived back in Sydney after the completion of a Regional Presence Deployment.

As a father myself, this image fills me with profound emotion and represents one of the most meaningful photographs I've ever captured. The moment shows the pure joy and connection between a returning sailor and his young child, with the little one's innocent gesture of touching his father's face conveying more about the reality of naval service than any operational photograph ever could. The composition isolates this intimate moment against a softly blurred background, allowing the viewer to focus entirely on the emotional exchange between father and child. The lighting captures the warmth and tenderness of the reunion, whilst the naval uniform serves as a reminder of the service and sacrifice that make these moments so precious. It was an honour to document such a deeply personal moment, and the image represents everything that naval service ultimately protects – family, love, and the bonds that sustain us through separation and challenge. This photograph reminds us that behind every uniform is a person with relationships and responsibilities that extend far beyond their naval duties.





A guard of honour is formed by the ship's company of HMAS Hobart for outgoing Commanding Officer HMAS Hobart, Commander Tina Brown, CSM, RAN, during a ceremony after the completion of a Regional Presence Deployment in Sydney, NSW.

I could visualise this shot forming in my mind as the ceremony approached, understanding that I needed to be in position before the departing skipper, Commander Tina Brown began her walk through the traditional guard of honour. The composition uses selective focus to isolate Captain Brown in sharp detail whilst the surrounding personnel create a beautiful frame of soft bokeh, highlighting both the ceremony's formal structure and the personal nature of this significant moment. The depth of field technique draws the viewer's attention directly to the departing captain whilst conveying the magnitude of respect being shown by her crew. This image captures a wonderful naval tradition that represents the culmination of a successful command and the respect earned through dedicated service. The precise timing required to capture this moment – with Captain Brown perfectly positioned and the guard of honour creating symmetrical lines on either side – demonstrates how naval photography often requires anticipation and preparation rather than simply reacting to events as they unfold.





An Australian Army CH-47 Chinook takes off from HMAS Canberra near the coast of Futuna Island to conduct a vertical replenishment during Operation VANUATU ASSIST 2023.

This aerial photograph captures a fortunate moment that perfectly encapsulates the adventure and humanitarian mission of naval service in the remote corners of the Pacific. The image shows naval and army assets providing crucial support to Vanuatu's remote Futuna Island, with the dramatic landscape providing a stunning backdrop that emphasises just how far from home these operations can take us. The composition balances the human-made elements – the ship and helicopter – against the natural beauty of the Pacific island, highlighting how naval operations often occur in some of the world's most spectacular and challenging environments. The crystal-clear blue waters and mountainous terrain create a sense of adventure and exploration that speaks to the heart of naval service. What makes this image particularly meaningful is how it represents the dual nature of naval operations – combining the excitement of visiting remote and beautiful locations with the serious mission of assisting communities in need. The scale of the landscape against HMAS Canberra emphasises both the capability required for such operations and the service being provided to isolated Pacific communities.





HMAS *Brisbane* sails off the coast of New South Wales during Exercise MALABAR 2023.

This extraordinary photograph captures one of those rare moments when nature provides a spectacular backdrop to naval operations. I had been observing the weather system forming throughout the day and recognised the potential for something special to develop. Fortunately, I had another assignment in the same area of the ship when this magnificent double rainbow appeared, creating what can only be described as a once-in-a-lifetime photographic opportunity. The composition balances the industrial elements of the ship's deck equipment with the natural drama unfolding in the sky above, whilst the wet deck surfaces add reflective elements that enhance the overall impact. What makes this image particularly meaningful is how it represents the unpredictable beauty that can emerge during naval operations – moments when the challenging conditions at sea suddenly transform into something genuinely magical. The complete arc of the rainbow framing the ship's superstructure creates an almost symbolic representation of hope and resilience, perfectly capturing the spirit of naval service where sailors must be prepared for whatever conditions nature presents.



Members of the women's Australian Defence Force Rugby League team form a huddle before a game against the women's Papua New Guinea Defence Force Rugby League team at the Santos National Football Stadium, Port Moresby, Papua New Guinea.

This image captures a powerful moment of teamwork and solidarity among the Australian Defence Force women's rugby league team before their match in Papua New Guinea. The circular huddle composition, shot from above, creates an intimate view into this pre-game ritual, whilst the vibrant green and gold colours of the Australian uniforms create a strong visual impact against the darker background. What strikes me about this photograph is how it demonstrates the universal nature of team sports – regardless of whether these women are serving in the military or competing on the rugby field, the bonds of teamwork and mutual support remain constant. The overlapping hands in the centre of the frame symbolise unity and shared purpose, whilst the determined expressions visible on the players' faces convey the focus and commitment that define both military service and competitive sport. This image represents the broader story of Australian servicewomen excelling in all areas of their lives, from operational duties to representing their country in international sporting competitions.



United States Marine Corps MV-22B Osprey performs deck landing manoeuvres onboard Royal Australian Navy Landing Helicopter Dock HMAS Canberra (L02) during Exercise Rim of the Pacific (RIMPAC) 2022.

Captured during challenging nighttime flying operations off the coast of Hawaii's largest island, this image documents the precision and complexity of naval aviation in partnership with our US Marine allies. The dramatic coloured lighting transforms the flight deck into an almost cinematic environment, whilst the helicopter's rotor disc creates dynamic movement against the night sky. What made this photograph particularly special was the opportunity to work alongside my mentor and good friend, Petty Officer Imagery Specialist Christopher Szumlanski, whose guidance and friendship have been invaluable throughout my development as a naval photographer. The technical challenges of shooting in these low-light conditions – balancing the bright deck lighting with the darker sky whilst maintaining sharp detail in the aircraft – required careful attention to exposure settings and timing. The image represents the international cooperation that defines modern naval operations, showing Australian and American forces working seamlessly together in complex aviation operations that demand the highest levels of skill and professionalism from all involved.



A United States Marine Corps UH-1Y Venom helicopter launches from the flight deck of Royal Australian Navy Landing Helicopter Dock HMAS Canberra above an United States Marine Corps AH-1Z Viper helicopter during Exercise Rim of the Pacific (RIMPAC) 2022 in the Pacific Ocean.

Photographed off the coast of Hawaii, this image showcases the impressive aviation capabilities of our US Marine allies in what can only be described as a truly remarkable moment. The stacked helicopter composition demonstrates the precision and coordination required for complex naval aviation operations, whilst the clear blue sky and ocean backdrop emphasise the challenging maritime environment in which these operations take place. The technical execution required careful timing to capture both aircraft with their rotor discs visible whilst maintaining sharp focus throughout the frame. What makes this image particularly compelling is how it illustrates the scale and sophistication of modern military aviation – these powerful machines operating in perfect harmony above the vast Pacific Ocean. The dramatic perspective, shooting upward from the deck, gives viewers a sense of the impressive scale of these operations, whilst the distinctive shark mouth nose art on the lower helicopter adds character and personality to what might otherwise be purely technical documentation.



Royal Australian Navy Lieutenant Samuel Laidlaw controls air traffic from the Flight Bridge on board Royal Australian Navy Landing Helicopter Dock HMAS *Canberra* during Exercise Rim of the Pacific (RIMPAC) 2022 in the Pacific Ocean.

This portrait of Lieutenant Sam Laidlaw was captured aboard HMAS *Canberra* during a planned photoshoot that presented significant lighting challenges. Shot during the peak of the day whilst operating in the middle of the Pacific Ocean, the harsh overhead sunlight streaming through the bridge windows required careful balance between the bright exterior light and the more subdued interior lighting. The composition places the officer within the context of the sophisticated technology and equipment that defines the modern naval bridge, whilst the natural lighting from the large windows creates depth and dimension throughout the frame. What I find compelling about this image is how it captures both the technical complexity of naval command and the human element – showing a professional naval officer comfortable and confident in his environment of advanced navigation and communication systems. The image represents the modern naval officer who must be equally adept with cutting-edge technology and traditional leadership principles, seamlessly integrating both to command effectively in contemporary maritime operations.

08.



**The Rosemary Rodwell
Memorial Prize**

Shoot to win



2025.

Every year, Navy shutterbugs step up for the Rosemary Rodwell Memorial Prize—a high-stakes competition judged blindly by senior imagery specialists across the Navy, Army, and Air Force. It's the photo-world equivalent of winning the footy flag, and the standard is fierce.

Photographers submit their best five shots, interpreting the theme with creativity and precision. The process isn't just about winning—it's about growth. Seeing how others approach the brief sparks new ideas, and feedback from seasoned pros becomes fuel for improvement.

Whether it's a top-three finish or the overall win, the recognition validates a sailor's craft and pushes their photography to the next level. It's not just a contest—it's a proving ground for passion, skill, and storytelling.

The Rosemary Rodwell Memorial Prize was established in memory of Petty Officer Wran Writer Rosemary Rodwell to recognise the 'Pursuit of Excellence' among the Royal Australian Navy's Imagery Specialists. Joining the RAN in May 1963 at the age of 24, Rosemary's distinguished career spanned more than 20 years, during which she was awarded the British Empire Medal, served as Secretary to the Chief of Naval Staff and was an integral member of the RAN Bicentennial Committee. Rosemary passed away in April 1987 as a result of a tragic car accident. Her legacy lives on through this award, which celebrates imagery specialists who pursue excellence and capture moments that matter.

The following list of Rosemary Rodwell Memorial Prize winners for photographic achievements is recorded for posterity:

Two MH-60R Seahawk helicopters circle HMAS Warramunga, HMAS Stuart and HMAS Toowoomba as the ships prepare to weigh anchor to conduct ASWEX 25.

Year Winner

2025	➤	Leading Seaman Imagery Specialist Ioan Roberts
2024	➤	Leading Seaman Imagery Specialist Daniel Goodman
2023	➤	Not awarded in 2023
2022	➤	Leading Seaman Imagery Specialist David Cox
2021	➤	Leading Seaman Imagery Specialist Ernesto Sanchez Jr
2020	➤	Leading Seaman Imagery Specialist Richard Cordell
2019	➤	Chief Petty Officer Kelvin Hockey
2018	➤	Leading Seaman Imagery Specialist Richard Cordell
2017	➤	Leading Seaman Imagery Specialist Richard Cordell
2016	➤	Petty Officer Imagery Specialist Kelvin Hockey
2015	➤	Able Seaman Imagery Specialist Kayla Hayes
2013	➤	Able Seaman Imagery Specialist Jesse Rhynard
2012	➤	Able Seaman Imagery Specialist Alan Lancaster
2011	➤	Leading Seaman Imagery Specialist Phillip Cullinan
2010	➤	Petty Officer Imagery Specialist Damian Pawlenko



Rosemary Rodwell
Memorial Prize
2021 Winner
LSIS Ernesto Sanchez



HMAS *Ballarat* approaches the United States Navy aircraft carrier USS *Carl Vinson* to conduct a replenishment at sea during a Regional Presence Deployment.



Rosemary Rodwell
Memorial Prize
2022 Winner
LSIS David Cox



“Stores Party Muster” captures an ADF MRH-90 Taipan helicopter airlifting supplies during clean-up operations on Atata Island, following the Hunga Tonga-Hunga Ha’apai volcanic eruption. Taken during Operation TONGA ASSIST 2022, the image highlights Defence’s rapid response and support to regional partners in crisis.



Rosemary Rodwell Memorial Prize 2024 Winner

LSIS Daniel Goodman



“Picture Perfect” captures HMAS *Stalwart* conducting a replenishment at sea with HMA Ships *Brisbane* and *Toowoomba*, while its embarked MH-60 Seahawk helicopter ‘Boomerang’ executes a vertical transfer of stores and mission-critical gear. Taken on 8 November 2023 during a regional presence deployment, the image highlights the Royal Australian Navy’s seamless ability to sustain operations at sea.



About the Author

Commander Will Singer MBA, CMC, RAN

Will Singer joined the Royal Australian Navy as a Public Relations Officer in 2013, bringing with him over three decades of leadership and management experience shaped across private enterprise and foreign military service. His military career began with the Mechanised South African Infantry and served in combat during the Angolan Bush War. Will later evolved into a distinguished consultancy path as a Certified Management Consultant, delivering transformative outcomes across industries from petrochemicals to Defence in Australia, Africa, and Asia.

Will is an Advanced Military Public Affairs Officer and has deployed on Operations FIJI ASSIST, BUSH FIRE ASSIST, and embarked on HMAS *Ballarat* during Indian Ocean Deployment 20–21. He played a pivotal role in Exercise RIMPAC 22—the world’s largest multinational maritime exercise—serving as a Military Public Affairs Officer to the RAN-led Combined Force Maritime Component Commander across high-impact public affairs activities. Will led the commissioning of the USS *Canberra* (LCS 30) in Sydney, which was a historic and deeply symbolic event—marking the first time a United States Navy warship was commissioned outside the US.

In 2025, he took on a rare operational leadership role as J3 Operations Manager at Headquarters Middle East, supporting Operation ACCORDION. Tasked with running the Joint Operations Room (JOR), he oversaw air movements in a dynamic operational theatre—an uncommon responsibility for a Public Affairs Officer and a testament to his adaptability and strategic acumen. Will is a Directing Staff member of the Joint Training Command, instructing Initial Entry Military Public Affairs Officers within a tri-service environment. He is currently the Military Public Affairs Officer, NO9 Joint Forces Maritime Component (JFMC) working at Headquarters Joint Operations Command.

Beyond operations, Will Singer is an Ironman, completed 11 x 90km ultra marathons, a published author of Profit Factory, Grey Shutterbugs Volume One, and Anchors on Skin. He lives in Western Australia, where he supports the Fremantle Dockers, and expresses his creativity as a sculptor—transforming discarded bicycle and motorcycle parts into evocative works of art.

Terms and Abbreviations

Term	Meaning
1 JPAU	The 1st Joint Public Affairs Unit (1JPAU) provides the ADF with a tri-service, deployable tactical Public Affairs capability.
3RAR	The 3rd Battalion, Royal Australian Regiment (3 RAR) is the armoured infantry battalion of the Australian Army.
5RAR	The 5th Battalion, Royal Australian Regiment is a regular motorised infantry battalion of the Australian Army.
5th Aviation Regiment	The 5th Aviation Regiment is an Australian Army aviation unit operating helicopters.
AAW	Anti-Air Warfare
AI	Artificial Intelligence
ANNUALEX 2023	A Japan-led maritime exercise in the Philippine Sea aimed to strengthen enduring relationships while sharpening naval and air proficiencies as part of Australia's commitment to stability and security in the shared regions of participating nations.
AMCAP	Anzac Midlife Capability Assurance Program
AO	Officer of the Order of Australia
AO	Auxiliary - Oiler (Tanker)
ASLAV	The Australian Light Armoured Vehicle is an eight-wheeled amphibious armoured reconnaissance vehicle used by the Australian Army.

Term	Meaning
ASM	Anti-Ship Missile
ASMD	Anti-Ship Missile Defence
ASW	Anti-Submarine Warfare
ASWO	Anti-Submarine Warfare Officer ASWEX - Anti-Submarine Warfare Exercise.
Birdie	Navy slang for a member of the aviation branch or Fleet Air Arm.
Chefo	Navy slang for the Chief Cook or senior Cook rating on board a ship.
CFMCC	Combined Force Maritime Component Commander
CH-47 Chinook	The Boeing CH-47 Chinook is a versatile, twin-engine, tandem rotor heavy-lift helicopter.
CMDS	Counter Measure Defence Systems helicopters are self-protection systems that use decoys like chaff and flares, along with electronic warfare (EW) capabilities, to deceive or defeat incoming heat-seeking and radar-guided missiles.
CTF	Commander Task Force
CTG	Commander Task Group
CTU	Commander Task Unit
DD	Destroyer
DDG	Guided Missile Destroyer

Term	Meaning
Dibbie	Navy slang for a Boatswain's Mate.
ESSM	Evolved Sea Sparrow Missile
Executive Officer	Seaman Officer Second in Command and Head of the Seaman Department in a warship.
Exercise BERSAMA GOLD 21	A tri-service (air, sea, and land) military exercise held in October 2021 as part of the Five Power Defence Arrangements (FPDA) to commemorate the FPDA's 50th anniversary.
Exercise KAKADU	Multinational maritime activities ranging from constabulary operations to high-end maritime warfare in a combined environment.
Exercise KEEN SWORD 2022	A joint/bilateral exercise involving high-end warfighting exercises off southern Japan with ships and submarines from the US Navy, Japan Maritime Self-Defense Force, Royal Australian Navy, Royal Navy, and Royal Canadian Navy.
Exercise KERIS WOOMERA 2024	A component of the ADF's wider Indo-Pacific Endeavour programme, represents the largest ever combined joint activity between Australia and Indonesia.
Exercise MALABAR	Exercise Malabar is an annual, multilateral naval exercise between the United States, India, Japan, and Australia, which began as a bilateral exercise in 1992.
Exercise PACIFIC DRAGON	Pacific Dragon, hosted by US. 3rd Fleet, is a biennial exercise designed to improve participating forces' ability to work together to track and intercept ballistic missiles.

Term	Meaning
Exercise TALISMAN SABRE	Exercise Talisman Sabre is the largest exercise conducted in Australia. Talisman Sabre is bilaterally designed between Australia and the United States, and is a multilaterally planned and conducted exercise.
FAA	Fleet Air Arm
Federation Guard	Australia's Federation Guard is the Australian Defence Force's official tri-service ceremonial unit.
FFG	Guided Missile Frigate
FFH	Frigate with assigned Helicopter
FPV Drone	FPV (First-Person View) drone
GOA	Government of Australia
Greenie	Navy slang for an Electronics Technician.
HMAS Creswell	The Royal Australian Naval College, commonly known as Creswell, is the naval academy of the Royal Australian Navy.
Indo-Pacific Endeavour 21	Indo-Pacific Endeavour 21 (IPE21) was Australia's flagship regional engagement activity that focused on strengthening partnerships and cooperation in Southeast Asia through contactless port visits, virtual workshops, and at-sea activities conducted by HMA Ships <i>Canberra</i> and <i>Anzac</i> with partner nations, including Singapore and Malaysia.
JTF633	Joint Task Force 633 was the Australian Defence Force's (ADF) headquarters responsible for commanding and controlling all ADF operations in the Middle East region.

Term	Meaning
LARC	Australian Army Light Amphibious Resupply Craft
LCH	Landing Craft Heavy
LHD	Landing Helicopter Dock
Long Look	A reciprocal exchange between the ADF and the UK Armed Forces.
LPA	Landing Platform Amphibious
LSH	Landing Ship – Heavy
LST	Landing Ship Tank
OIC	Officer in charge
Operation ACCORDION	Operation ACCORDION is the Australian Defence Force's support mission for all activities in the Middle East region, enabling contingency planning and enhancement of regional relationships.
Operation BUSHFIRE ASSIST 19-20	Operation BUSHFIRE ASSIST was ADF's support to the catastrophic 2019–2020 bushfires which began on 31 December 2019.
Operation FIJI ASSIST	In February 2016 Cyclone Winston occurred and Australia's response, Operation FIJI ASSIST, involved a high tempo of operational international engagement.
Operation MANITOU	Operation MANITOU's goal is to support international efforts to promote maritime security, stability and prosperity in the Middle East region (MER).

Term	Meaning
OPSEC	Operations security
Operation RENDER SAFE	Operation Render Safe involves the removal of bombs, weapons and ammunition remaining from World War Two.
Operation TONGA ASSIST 2022	The Australian Defence Force's (ADF) support to Tonga, following the eruption of the Hunga Tonga-Hunga Ha'apai underwater volcano and the following tsunami.
Operation VANUATU ASSIST 2023	The Australian Defence Force's (ADF) support with the delivery of humanitarian aid, including food, shelter and medical supplies, to the country in the wake of Tropical Cyclones Judy and Kevin.
Operation WANTAIM	Australian Defence Force's (ADF) contribution to the Papua New Guinea (PNG) 50th anniversary of independence celebrations in 2025.
M777A2 Howitzer	The M777 155mm lightweight towed howitzer provides direct support to combat troops through offensive and defensive fires with conventional and precision-guided projectiles. It can also employ illuminating and smoke projectiles.
MRH-90 Taipan helicopter	The Multi Role Helicopter (MRH-90) replaced the existing Black Hawk and Sea King helicopter fleets in the Australian Defence Force (ADF).
MV-22B Osprey	The Bell Boeing V-22 Osprey is a US. multi-use, tiltrotor military transport and cargo aircraft with both vertical takeoff and landing and short takeoff and landing capabilities.
Phot	Slang for a military photographer (Imagery Specialist)

Term	Meaning
PHOTEX	Photographic Exercise
RAAF	Royal Australian Air Force
RANC	Royal Australian Naval College
RAS	Replenishment at Sea
RACK	Navy racks are essentially the equivalent of beds on land, but they are designed to optimise space and efficiency on a ship.
RHIB	Rigid Hull Inflatable Boat
RPD	Regional Presence Deployments demonstrate Australia's commitment and ability to maintain a near continuous presence in the region to support regional security and stability.
RIMPAC	Rim of the Pacific (International Naval Exercise)
RPA	Remotely Piloted Aircraft
Sea King	Medium-lift helicopter
SPC-A	Sea Power Centre – Australia
Stewards	Navy slang for a Hospitality Services Operator
Storbies	Navy slang for a Warehouse Storeperson
UH-1Y Venom helicopter	The Bell UH-1Y Venom is a twin-engine, 4-blade, medium-sized utility helicopter – also known as a 'Huey' or 'Super Huey'.
USN	United States Navy
WEEO	Weapons Electrical Engineering Officer ('The WEEO') – the Head of the Weapons Electrical Department of a warship. Also a qualification.
XO	Executive Officer (second in command)



NAVY





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