

Speech by Vice Admiral Ray Griggs, AO, CSC, RAN

Chief of Navy

International Fleet Review Reception

Saturday 5th October 2013



Your Excellency Ms Quentin Bryce, Governor General of the Commonwealth of Australia, Your Excellencies, Premier O'Farrell, Ministers Johnston, Morrison, Turnbull and Robert, Lord Mayor Clover Moore, Councillors, Mayors of various councils around Sydney, Fellow Chiefs of Navy, Former Chiefs of Navy, Distinguished Guests, Ladies and Gentlemen.

Can I start by acknowledging the traditional custodians of this land, the Gadigal people and the Eora nation, custodians not only of this land but of this beautiful harbour, this most beautiful maritime amphitheatre and I pay my respects to their elders past and present.

What a day, what a week really. It started in Jervis Bay and the Mayor of Shoalhaven and I will continue our conversation about the pronunciation of Jervis Bay, but I've got the last word tonight Joanna! We gathered to conduct two exercises this week, and we've had a very good professional week in the lead up to this commemorative activity.

Just in case you haven't heard why we're doing this or you haven't heard one of the many naval officers hitting the airwaves in the last few days. Just in case, why are we doing this? We are doing this to commemorate the day when we got our Navy. The 4th of October 1913, our Navy sailed into this harbour for the first time. We took some control of our maritime defence, something we hadn't any control of to that point. So it is a day of truly national significance. It is a day we should commemorate and remember.



Reviews, Fleet Reviews like the one you saw today were once about messaging about someone's might. Today that is not the case. Today it actually sends a very different message. And it is the international complexion of the review which is key to that message. That message is about cooperation and collaboration because, for most of us here from whatever nation are dependent on the sea for our prosperity and for our security and none of us can do it alone. That's why the collaboration and cooperation is so critical. And I'm very grateful to all the navies that are represented here tonight. Whether you sent a ship, a band, an aircraft or a delegation, it doesn't matter to me what the contribution was, the important things was it was a contribution and a commitment to that cooperation and collaboration that is so vitally important for us.

We are a working Navy; 25% of the fleet is at sea tonight, on operations and exercises around the world, on our northern borders, in Japan, Papua New Guinea and the Middle East where our 23 year commitment continues with our 56th individual ship deployment to that part of the world. It's important that people know we are a working Navy and not, as some have described as recently as last night, a photogenic Navy. We're certainly photogenic, but we're a working Navy. We're out there, out of sight, out of mind most of the time – not this weekend! – we're out there doing the job every day, like many of the navies that are represented here tonight.

Today could not have been possible without the contribution of so many people. Firstly the men and women of our Navy, we should start with them, because without them we are nothing. And close behind them are their families and their partners, because without them we cannot achieve what we need to achieve. And for those who have served, but are no longer serving, but still hold that close association to this great national institution, without the history they built we'd have nothing to commemorate.

To the International Fleet Review Planning team, led by Nick Bramwell, Mick Hicking, Garry Kennedy and others, they have worked extremely hard in the last two years to bring this to fruition and all the support teams that have helped make it happen.

I'd also like to acknowledge our partners and sponsors. The New South Wales Government: Premier, I've said it to you before, without the cooperation and support of the New South Wales State Government this couldn't have happened and the support and the cooperation has been absolutely extraordinary and I thank you very much for that. To the City of Sydney, Lord Mayor, again, without your support and the support of Council, and I am very pleased to see so many councillors here tonight, this couldn't have happened. The Sydney Opera House Trust, who have been incredibly flexible and incredibly generous; I thank you for your contribution to this day. To the Ford Motor company who have been very generous with a number of live sites around the harbour, so the people of Sydney can see the full experience of what you're about to see. To Imagination, the company which has put together the show you're about to see. To Legacy, the Australian Defence Credit Union, to the New South Wales Taxi Council and Cabcharge, who have been incredibly generous in their support of visiting sailors, to Lockheed Martin Australia and Qintetic, we thank you for your support.

This morning Michael West from the Metro Land Council presented me with a message stick before the start of the Fleet Review. And that message stick tells the story of the Indigenous contribution to the Navy over the last hundred years. In fact it identifies the first recorded Indigenous contribution to a colonial navy right back to 1860. We have worked very hard in recent years to improve not only our understanding, but also the participation of Indigenous Australians in the Navy and tonight you are going to see some incredibly fine examples of members of the Royal Australian Navy, who are Indigenous Australians, who are immensely proud Indigenous Australians. In recent months we have formed, for the first time, the Navy's Indigenous Performance Group and they will perform for you shortly. This is a hugely significant step for us and I'm very proud that we are able to allow you to see the world premiere tonight.

I thank you for being here tonight, I thank you for your support, in whatever guise it is. This is at the end of the day your Navy, not ours. We serve the people of this country and will continue to do so as we have done since Federation. Please enjoy the show and thank you very much for coming tonight.