

Commemorative Address

by Vice Admiral Ray Griggs, AO, CSC, RAN

Chief of Navy

for the International Fleet Review

Ecumenical Service at St Mary's Cathedral

Sunday 6th October 2013

Good Afternoon Ladies and Gentlemen.

The Navy has served the nation since Federation, first as the Commonwealth Naval Forces and then as the Royal Australian Navy. In war and in peace, through storm and strife, around Australia and around the world, Australians sailors have served with courage, integrity and loyalty.

The Navy's face is most often seen as its grey steel; its ships, its submarines, its aircraft; deployed where ever, whenever and ready to serve. But the heart and soul of the Navy has, is and always will be its people; Australian sailors who have come from every walk of life, from every corner of the country to serve their nation.

Today, as we remember the arrival of our Fleet in 1913, we also remember and give thanks for those who have given life to the Navy.

The Navy that I have the honour to be the steward of at this time stands on the shoulders of the lifetimes of effort and achievement of all those who have lived lives of unsung service, so that our ships, submarines and aircraft can do the business they need to do.

We give thanks for the lookouts in the Middle Watch when the rest of the ship is asleep; we give thanks for the engineers who keep the ships moving and fighting; we give thanks for the cooks who feed the crew, no matter what the weather, just as the cooks give thanks to the crew who eat their food no matter what the weather.

We give thanks for those who have been and are engaged in the relentless and hazardous work protecting our borders; we give thanks to our band, who bring a tear to our eye, who stir our soul and put a spring in our step; we give thanks for our allies and partners, with whom we have fought and struggled for the peace and freedoms we now enjoy.

What we do is not ordinary, it is not easy and it is often not understood by those who have not tasted this life. But it is an essential task, on which this nation depends.

Above all, we give thanks for those who have made the ultimate sacrifice, for the more than two and half thousand sailors who have given their lives in combat or on operational service in Australia's name to defend our security and our prosperity. Their legacy is our liberty and our future is built on their shoulders and on the faith they had in themselves, their mates, their ships and above all their God.

Going forward we will be a much more diverse Navy as part of a much more diverse Australian Defence Force. But faith remains a cornerstone for those whose role it is to apply deadly force when it is needed. It is faith that centres us, it is faith that helps us fight with honour and dignity, and it is faith in the human condition that allows us, when the fighting is done, to reconcile, forgive and move forward.