

Address by

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Chief of Navy

Navy Memorial Service

Martin Place Cenotaph, Sydney

Tuesday 8 October 2013

Her Excellency, the Governor of New South Wales, Professor and Honorary Commodore Marie Bashir; Minister Gladys Berejiklian, Minister for Transport and representing the Premier; Mr Tim Owen MP; Lord Mayor Clover Moore; Senator David Johnston, Minister for Defence; fellow Chiefs of Navy and senior international officers; Veterans; other Distinguished Guests; Ladies and Gentlemen.

We are here at the Cenotaph in Martin Place where, for generations, Australians have gathered to remember those who have died for our country in war and conflict. In gathering here I acknowledge the Gadigal people and the Eora nation, the traditional custodians of this land and pay my respects to their elders past and present, and any other indigenous Australians present.

Today in this hallowed place, we remember our sailors who never returned to us or their loved ones. Those who have made the ultimate sacrifice – giving their lives in combat or on operational service in Australia's name.

Our sailors volunteered because they knew Australia needed them: needed their courage; their integrity; their loyalty; their honesty; their honour. They knew the nation depended on them and they **did not** fail us.

In the oceans and seas all round the world, our sailors have served, fought and died for us. In the cold wastes of the Arctic Ocean; in the grey Atlantic; the English Channel and the North Sea; the Mediterranean; in the Red Sea; in the Sunda Strait; and throughout the vast reaches of the Pacific and Indian Oceans.

Our sailors served, fought and died far away and close to home, all up and down our coast, against enemy warships, submarines and aircraft, in the Arafura and Coral Seas. They searched for and destroyed the mines which threatened our shipping, risking and giving their lives.

Our sailors have risked and given their lives in South East Asia, in Korea, in Vietnam. They have served in the 56 individual ship deployments to the Middle East since 1990 and in countless operations and patrols on our borders.

They too are remembered here today.

We of course also remember our brothers and sisters in our sister services and the sacrifice they have made for this country.

As we remember those from other nations that have fought and died alongside us.

We also pause to remember our former adversaries in these conflicts; the thousands of them who have died who, by and large, were like our own sailors, doing their duty in serving the lands that they loved.

Some of our sailors gave their lives in famous battles; Sydney-Kormoran, the Tobruk ferry run, Guadalcanal, the Slot, Leyte Gulf. Some died in combat in small actions known to only a few; no matter how small these actions were they were vital steps in grueling campaigns to chart dangerous waters or bring supplies and troops to battle – the RAN Bridging Train at Gallipoli, the Coastwatchers, the Corvettes, HMAS *Sydney's* aircraft over Korea, Clearance Diving Team Three and the RAN Helicopter Flight in Vietnam.

Some died defiantly, some died quietly, some in terror trapped in the steel tomb that was their home. Some died adrift on the cruelest enemy of all, the sea, against which we as mariners all wage our own battle. Many struggled with what they saw in the service of their land and for many their battle raged long after their return and was too often waged alone and in silence. Many lost that battle in the end.

All gave their lives for the security and prosperity of this country, for the freedom and way of life we enjoy.

Australia's sailors have always done their duty to their utmost, turned towards the enemy, even against hopeless odds, like HMAS *Yarra* did in 1942 in the Arafura Sea.

These Australians who we remember with pride would have considered themselves to be ordinary people. But they were not and what they achieved was not ordinary; they were the fighting sailors of the Royal Australian Navy and they are an example to us all. Our Navy stands on the shoulders of the lifetimes of extraordinary effort and achievement of those who have gone before us.

Lest we forget.