

Chief of Navy Christmas 2017 Message

Navy has achieved a number of significant milestones this year through our people and capability developments; a year we can certainly be proud of as a Navy.

We have demonstrated that we are a highly capable Navy which can generate and deploy self-supported and sustainable Task Groups, equipped with a wide range of capabilities from high-end warfighting to Humanitarian Assistance and Disaster Relief.

We successfully participated in TALISMAN SABRE 2017; a complex and challenging exercise involving some 33,000 participants, 36 warships and over 220 aircraft from the United States and Australia.

We have successfully deployed more than 1100 Navy personnel, six ships, and embarked helicopters with the Joint Task Group *Indo-Pacific Endeavour 2017*.

Led by HMAS *Adelaide*, this deployment was Australia's biggest co-ordinated Task Group operation since the early 1980s. A deployment which heralded our return to Task Group operations in our region.

This displayed Navy's strategic utility to government by delivering the agility and responsiveness that is at the very heart of our approach to addressing and responding to the ever-growing set of threat scenarios in our region. Our deployment received significance praise in the region, and also making our potential adversaries aware of our capability.

This year we have supported Humanitarian and Disaster Relief (HADR) efforts locally and overseas with HMA Ships *Choules*, *Melville* and *Huon* assisting in relief efforts during Operation

QUEENSLAND ASSIST 17 and Operation VANUATU ASSIST 17. Again we have displayed our agility to respond, and our utility in providing much needed assistance.

We have consistently met our requirement to provide Patrol Boats to Operation RESOLUTE in support of our important border protection operations, and have maintained our commitment to Middle East operations in Operation MANITOU. HMA Ships *Arunta*, *Newcastle* and *Warramunga* deployed to make significant contributions to maritime security operations in the Middle East Region.

The new Seahawk Romeo Helicopters have entered service as a highly capable anti-submarine warfare helicopter and are proving their value both here in Australia and deployed operations.

Our submarine force is consistently generating the operational availability that the Coles report said we should be able to achieve under international benchmarks. We have deployed our submarines into the region on a number of occasions, exercising with our allies and further developing our theatre anti-submarine warfare capability.

This year we have committed unprecedented levels of forces for employment by Chief of Joint Operations. To do this it means every part of Navy has made a significant contribution to our success through our people, our capability, our professionalism and our commitment.

While achieving all of these operational outcomes, I am very pleased to report that we have also seen improvements in the seaworthiness of our vessels with the implementation of the Defence Seaworthiness Management System. The most notable success has been with the LHDs in identifying the issues, working with industry partners to rectify the issues and returning the LHDs to service.

We have also taken a number of significant steps forward in rebuilding and expanding the Navy in accordance with the Defence White Paper 2016 and the Naval Shipbuilding Plan.

The first DDG, HMAS *Hobart* commissioned on 23 September 2017 and the remaining two DDGs are progressing as scheduled. The interest in these high end warfighting ships has certainly been a win for Navy's capability. We have just seen NUSHIP *Brisbane* start seagoing trials and look forward to her entering into service.

The Navy's other major shipbuilding projects are all progressing well and on track. Only recently was I in Spain for the keel-laying of the new replenishment ship which will arrive in Australia from 2019.

We have only achieved these great outcomes because of your continued tremendous commitment and service — whether you serve in our ships, aircraft, submarines, dive teams or in the maintenance, sustainment, training and support that enables our operational capabilities.

Navy's achievements in 2017 are a credit to you all — I thank each of you for your dedication to serve.

The Christmas and New Year holiday period can be a stressful time and I ask each of you to make a particular effort over this holiday period to make sure your shipmates and their families are OK and, if you are concerned, don't hesitate to seek support and advice through your command, the health service or DCO.

Your personal wellbeing and that of your family is extremely important to me and to your fellow shipmates.

To those who will remain on watch, at sea and ashore, and to those who remain at short notice to respond, I thank you for

your devotion to duty. Others can relax and celebrate because you remain vigilant.

As we enter the New Year I ask that you continue your tremendous work. I also ask that you continue to challenge, to innovate and to imagine new ways of doing business as we prepare to bring significant capabilities and platforms into service in 2018 and beyond.

I wish everyone a safe and happy Christmas, and I look forward to seeing and working with you again in the New Year.