

## Return of HMAS MELBOURNE from Operation SLIPPER

### Vice Admiral Ray Griggs, Chief of Navy

15 March 2014

- Prime Minister and Mrs Abbott, Ministers Turnbull and Robert, Deputy Leader of the Opposition, The Hon. Tanya Plibersek, Shadow Parliamentary Secretary for Defence, Ms Gai Brodtmann, Fleet Commander, Deputy Chief of the Royal New Zealand Navy, Commodore Dean McDougall, families and friends of the ship's company of HMAS *Melbourne* and other distinguished guests.
- Good morning to you on this most perfect of Sydney mornings.
- Could I start by acknowledging the Gadigal people of the Eora nation, the traditional custodians of this land and this beautiful harbour and pay my respects to their elders past and present.
- Those of you here know better than most that ours is a working Navy; on any day nearly a quarter of the ships of the RAN are on operations. Today seven Major Fleet Units are operating away from their home ports for three or more months. Shortly, much to your delight, that number will reduce to six.
- Today is of course a special one, the culmination of over a year of preparation, training and execution of the mission. But above all today is about the end of a long period apart.
- Of course many of you have done this before, for some though this has been the first time you have lived through such a long and challenging deployment.
- There will have been times when you no doubt have thought 'is this worth it?' But from where I sit, looking at what this ship's company has achieved, I think it has absolutely been worth it.

- The results they've achieved in this deployment have been simply outstanding. The ship really has made a difference to the maritime security in the Middle East area and has punched a significant hole in terrorist funding through the \$1.2 billion worth of drug interceptions.
- We have been contributing to this mission for 24 years; over 11,000 RAN personnel and 57 individual ship deployments have formed this contribution.
- For Australia it is an important commitment to an important area of the world. For Navy it is a big commitment, but an even bigger commitment for the more than 11,000 families that like yours and mine have played a crucial part in enabling and supporting this mission.
- Thank you for your contribution to this deployment. I know it is a commitment that is not only made on deployment, but is one that you make day in, day out while your loved one serves our country. None of us can continue to serve without your support.
- Can I also thank the support team that makes today possible, organisations both within Navy and external to it, your efforts more often than not go unsung.
- Prime Minister, we are honoured that you can spend some of your valuable time today to witness this particular homecoming. I would appreciate it if you could say a few words to the justly proud families and friends of the ship's company of HMAS *Melbourne*.