

# SEMAPHORE

NEWSLETTER OF THE SEA POWER CENTRE - AUSTRALIA

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## THE ROYAL AUSTRALIAN NAVY HERITAGE CENTRE

On 4 October 1913 the ships of the new Australian Fleet Unit sailed into Sydney Harbour for the first time. On 4 October 2005, the Royal Australian Navy (RAN) will reach another major milestone with the opening of the RAN Heritage Centre (RANHC). The need for such a facility has been recognised for many years. In 1922, Vice Admiral Sir William Creswell, the RAN's first professional Head suggested the building of a museum to permanently display the Australian Navy's already rich and unique heritage. Since then, there have been several attempts to establish an international-standard naval museum. The origins of what is now about to become the RANHC date from 2001, when the then Chief of Navy commissioned a Naval Heritage Management Study to examine in detail how the RAN's past might best be used to support the present Navy's goals. One of the most important recommendations was the creation of a facility for the public display of the Naval Heritage Collection (NHC). Once approval for funding was received, a RANHC Project Board was formed and the project began on 24 May 2004.

### MISSION AND DESIGN

The RAN believes it is important that all Australians have the opportunity to understand their Navy's valuable contribution to the development and security of the nation. The NHC contains more than 250,000 individual items, and the mission of the RANHC is to display those objects of museum standard to the public, and through these displays capture something of the Australian naval experience. The Centre is located within the Public Access Precinct at the northern end of Garden Island, Sydney and makes use of two National Estate listed buildings: the former Gun Mounting Workshop (1922) and the Garden Island Boatshed (1913). The precinct also includes a landscaped external exhibition space between the two buildings.

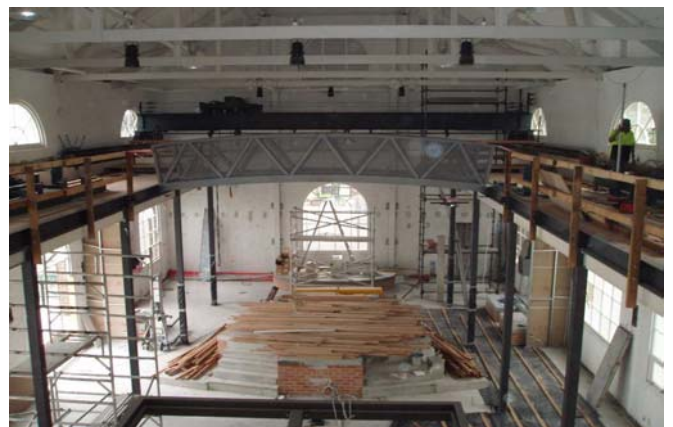


Display plinths under construction in the Gun Mounting Workshop building

In its design, the Centre seeks to retain the industrial and naval feel of the buildings, while providing a museum facility with multi-function capability. In addition to the exhibition galleries, the RANHC includes an indoor/outdoor café, an education and small conference facility named the *Tingira* Room, and an exhibition space for naval and ship associations to use. Both the *Tingira* Room and the café/Large Technical Item display area will also be available for hire once the Centre is opened.

### EXHIBITION THEMES AND DISPLAYS

The overall theme of the initial exhibition is *Australia's Navy in Peace and War*. The two main exhibition themes are *Business on Great Waters* and *A Sailor's Life For Me*. The first of these emphasises the history of the sea-going Navy, while the second tells the story of the RAN's people and highlights the traditions that still underpin our professional fighting Service.



Special Exhibition Gallery under construction in the Gun Mounting Workshop building

### The Displays

The displays have been developed to provide visitors with a contrasting portrayal of events and elements, ranging over more than 100 years of Australian naval history. Some displays are chronological, but most are thematic and emphasise the uniqueness of naval service. The size and variety of items held by the NHC allows for the rotation of displays over an extended period. The initial displays will include:

*The Battle of Sydney*: This centres on the conning tower from one of the Japanese midget submarines that attacked Sydney Harbour on the night of 31 May - 1 June 1942, and also includes the Boom Boat belonging to the Maritime Services Board that first raised the alarm. The display is supported by an interactive audio-visual presentation.



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**In Which We Serve:** This is a large chronological display of items that tell the stories of famous Australian ships and their battles. Artefacts are included from the colonial era, the First and Second World Wars, the Cold War and more recent operations in the Persian Gulf.

**The Professions of a Navy:** This is a large thematic display focusing on how the Navy's people have 'done the job' at sea over the years. Branches and categories past and present are used to explain how the naval profession has changed and developed.

**Naval Technology & Ordnance:** A specific display illustrating how the Navy has developed and applied technology to the sea-fighting environment. It includes precision instruments for navigation and gunnery, in addition to examples of naval ordnance ranging from shells and torpedoes to modern guided missiles.

**The Bridge:** This is a mock-up of a Battle class destroyer's open bridge, and is one of the major interactive displays in the Centre. Using original equipment from 50 years ago, *the Bridge* is aimed at helping visitors acquire some experience of what takes place on a warship's bridge at sea.

**A Sailor's Life for Me:** This main exhibition display uses the entire mezzanine level of the workshop building, and provides visitors with an introduction to a sailor's life at sea. The display includes a mock-up of a WWII mess deck, as well as artefacts highlighting naval traditions and pastimes.

**The Periscope:** Those who serve beneath the waves have not been forgotten, and in a unique interactive display a fully operational submarine attack periscope has been installed to allow visitors an unusual view of Sydney Harbour.

**Boats and Dockyards:** The 1913 Boatshed has been dedicated as the display gallery for artefacts related to small boats and Australian dockyards, particularly Garden Island.

## OPERATIONS OF THE RANHC

**Opening Hours.** The RANHC will be open from 0930 to 1530 daily. The café will operate between the same hours. The Centre and Garden Island Public Access Precinct will be closed on Good Friday, Christmas Day, Boxing Day, New Year's Eve and New Year's Day.

**Entry Fees.** Entry is free to all areas of the RANHC and Garden Island Public Access Precinct except for the Special Exhibition Gallery, where a fee of \$5 will be applied. Revenue raised at the RANHC will go directly to conserving, restoring and exhibiting the Collection nationally.

**Access and Security Prohibitions.** The RANHC shares a fence line with Garden Island Dockyard and the need to ensure visitor safety and maintain the security of the operational areas of the dockyard is a priority. Consequently, there is no direct pedestrian or private vehicle access to the Centre.

From 5 October 2005, and in collaboration with Sydney Ferries Corporation, pedestrian visitors can access the RANHC via the Circular Quay to Watson's Bay ferry, which will stop at the Garden Island Ferry Wharf during opening hours. Organised tour groups visiting the Centre

will be permitted to transit Garden Island Dockyard in their own bus. However, passengers may not disembark until they are inside the Public Access Precinct. Additionally, private vessels will remain prohibited from entering the Naval Waters around Garden Island.

## FACILITIES AND SERVICES

**The Salthorse Café.** The Salthorse Café provides visitors with café meals and beverages. The café includes interior and al fresco dining areas with views over Sydney Harbour. The café also supports out-of-hours functions and activities.

**The Tingira Room.** The *Tingira* Room is named after HMAS *Tingira*, an ex-clipper ship commissioned by the RAN in 1913 and anchored in Rose Bay, Sydney until 1929. *Tingira* was used as a training ship for boy seamen between the ages of 12 and 15. The room is primarily an educational space for school groups. Defence or private groups who wish to hold small conferences, meetings, leadership retreats or other functions for up to 70 persons in a unique location will be able to book the *Tingira* Room for a small fee.

**Function Hire.** The Gun Mounting Workshop Main Gallery can be hired as a venue for functions outside normal opening hours. The largest function possible is a Reception / Cocktail Party for approximately 300 people.

**Anniversary Exhibition Area.** An anniversary exhibition area is included in the workshop building Main Gallery. This area has been reserved for Naval and Ship Associations and other like-minded groups to use for their commemorations and reunions.

## THE FUTURE

The opening of the RANHC is a major event in the preservation and display of Australia's naval heritage. The continued development of the RANHC will ensure that it becomes an institution of national significance. It is a facility that not only supports the RAN's goals, but also meets the Navy's responsibilities to remember the service of those who have proudly served their nation at sea in peace and war.



*Reproduction of the Plaque presented by the City of Sydney to HMAS Sydney II, in commemoration of Sydney II's destruction of the Italian cruiser Bartolomeo Colleoni*

More information on the RANHC is available from the Centre's website: <http://www.navy.gov.au/ranhc/>



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