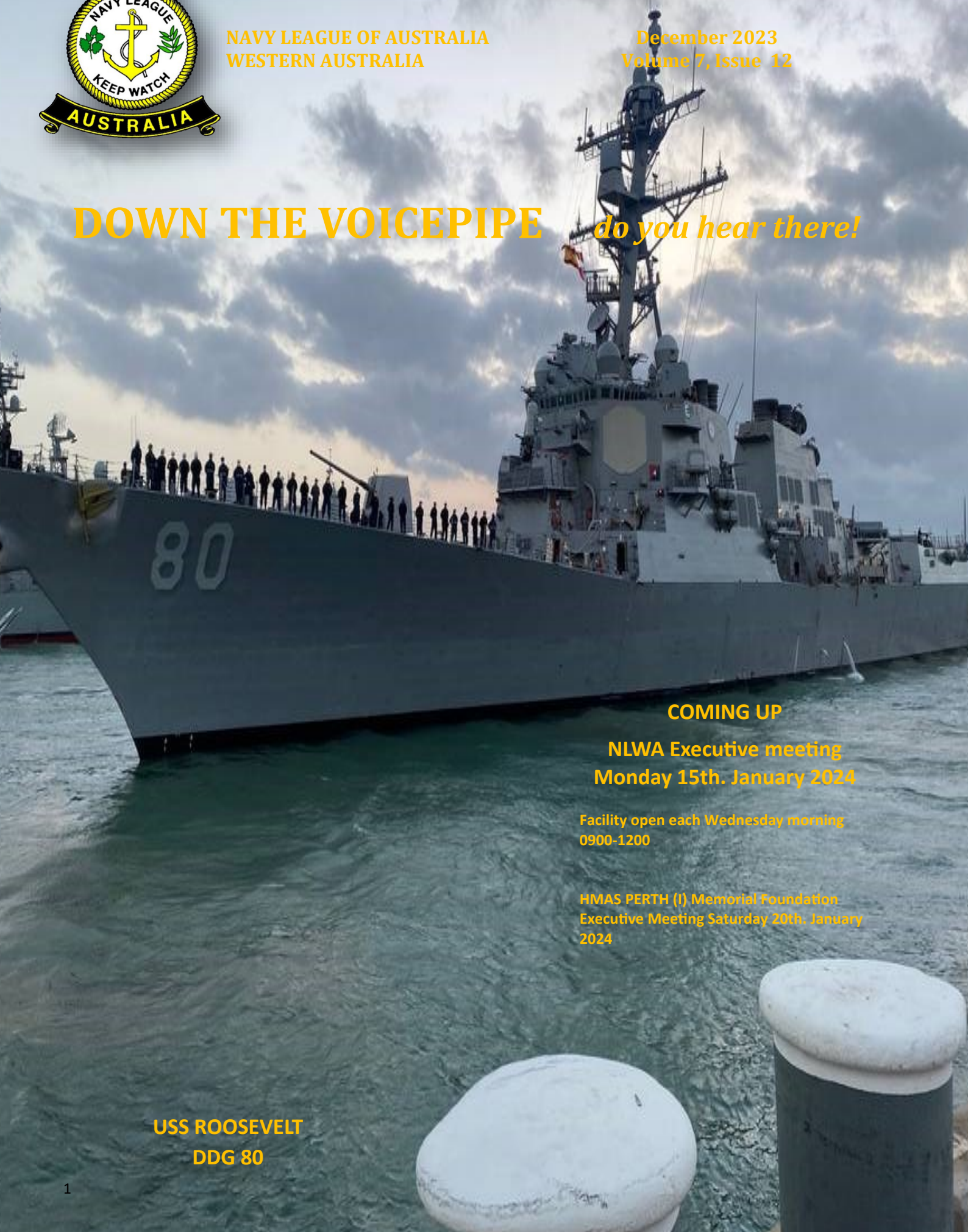




NAVY LEAGUE OF AUSTRALIA  
WESTERN AUSTRALIA

December 2023  
Volume 7, Issue 12

# DOWN THE VOICEPIPE *do you hear there!*



## COMING UP

NLWA Executive meeting  
Monday 15th. January 2024

Facility open each Wednesday morning  
0900-1200

HMAS PERTH (I) Memorial Foundation  
Executive Meeting Saturday 20th. January  
2024

USS ROOSEVELT  
DDG 80



## Navy League of Australia Western Australia Division News update



We've made it to the end of another year and with that comes the opportunity to look back and reflect on how the year was, not just for us and our members but for the population in general. For NLWA 2023 was another year that saw growth, innovation and connection but was also tinged with some sad moments when we said goodbye to some great people.

December began with our traditional travelling group lunch and with around thirty attendees, it was the biggest one to date. This time last year, almost straight after the lunch I was sitting here with Covid and being the sharing type I immediately passed this onto my wife. Twelve months on and I'm very pleased to report a clean bill of health this time round, for me anyway. My wife still suffers long covid and some thirteen months on still has no sense of smell or taste. Hopefully this changes as we head into 2024.

Mid December saw a sad and sombre time with the passing of former RAN Commander Bill Ritchie. Bill was a pillar among others, a true gentleman and for a man who was so highly decorated and so highly regarded, he never lost touch with normality, greeting anyone and everyone he met with the same smile and handshake. It mattered little to Bill whether a person was wealthy or struggling, an upper level manager, the person sweeping the carpark or anyone in between, everyone was treated with the same level of friendship and respect. Our sincere condolences to Bill's family. Later in December saw the passing of WO QMG Alan Meyer and although not a NL member he was always supportive of our endeavours. Fair Winds and Following Seas to two of the RAN's finest..

On behalf of myself and my family I'd like to extend our very best wishes for Christmas and the New Year. May 2024 be the year we've all been waiting so long for. Please take the time to enjoy family and friends and also spare a thought for those on duty throughout this period who would no doubt like to spend the time with their families also.

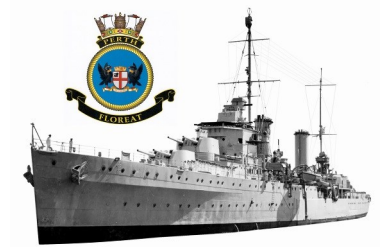
Until next year

Brad

Navy League and HMAS PERTH (I) Polo shirts will soon be available approx. price \$45 + delivery if required final price will reflect on how many we order. Place your order to [NLWA.bandjoneill.1@bigpond.com](mailto:NLWA.bandjoneill.1@bigpond.com)







The Foundation flies the following National Flags 24/7 and flies the Naval Ensigns on special occasions. As the flags and at times the ensigns are flown 24/7 wear and tear with the elements requires the flags to be changed every six months. We are looking for individuals or associations that would like to donate or purchase new flags to replacing the flags the size we fly are 1800x900. Your support would be most welcome. Postal Address HMAS PERTH (I) Memorial Foundation Incorporated PO Box 735 Fremantle WA 6959.

#### NATIONAL FLAGS



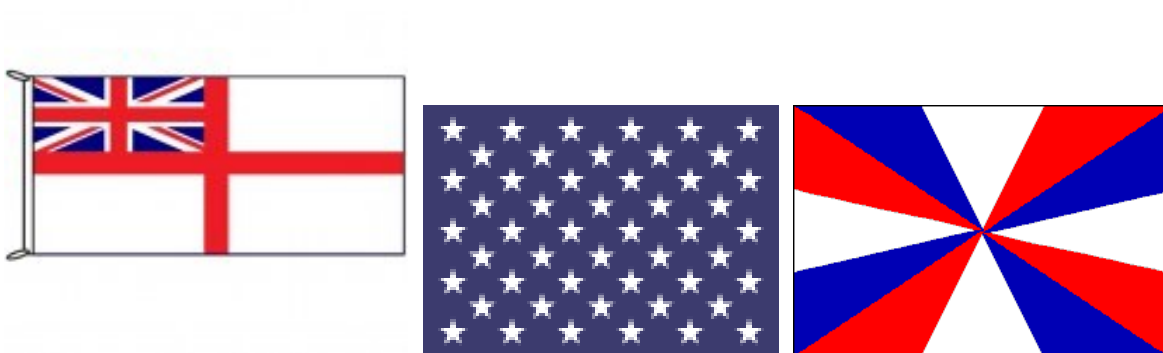
United Kingdom

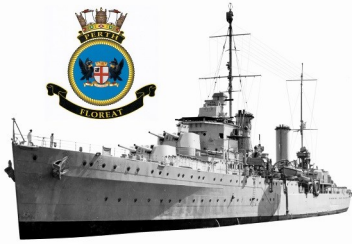
American

Dutch

#### NAVAL ENSIGNS

Royal Navy, United States of America, Netherlands, United States Marines, United States Navy





## HMAS PERTH (I) MEMORIAL UPDATE Incorporating NLWA and the HMAS PERTH (I) Memorial Foundation Incorporated



Jim O'Neill  
 CMDR ANC RTD  
 Project Manager

As we move forward into 2024 I am pleased to announce that a building permit has been issued for the final stage of the project. We have also been advised that the steel has been ordered by BAE and that pre-fabrication will begin mid January. With the pending closure of the Navy Club in Fremantle we have been gifted with photos of HMAS PERTH (I) and USS HOUSTON together with a couple of framed artifacts. These have now been inserted into the memorial.

We were saddened to learn the passing of a staunch supporter of the Foundation recently of Ean Willemssen and we extend our sympathy to Val and family. Ena's brother served on PERTH and unfortunately lost his life during the battle of the Sunda Strait in 1942.

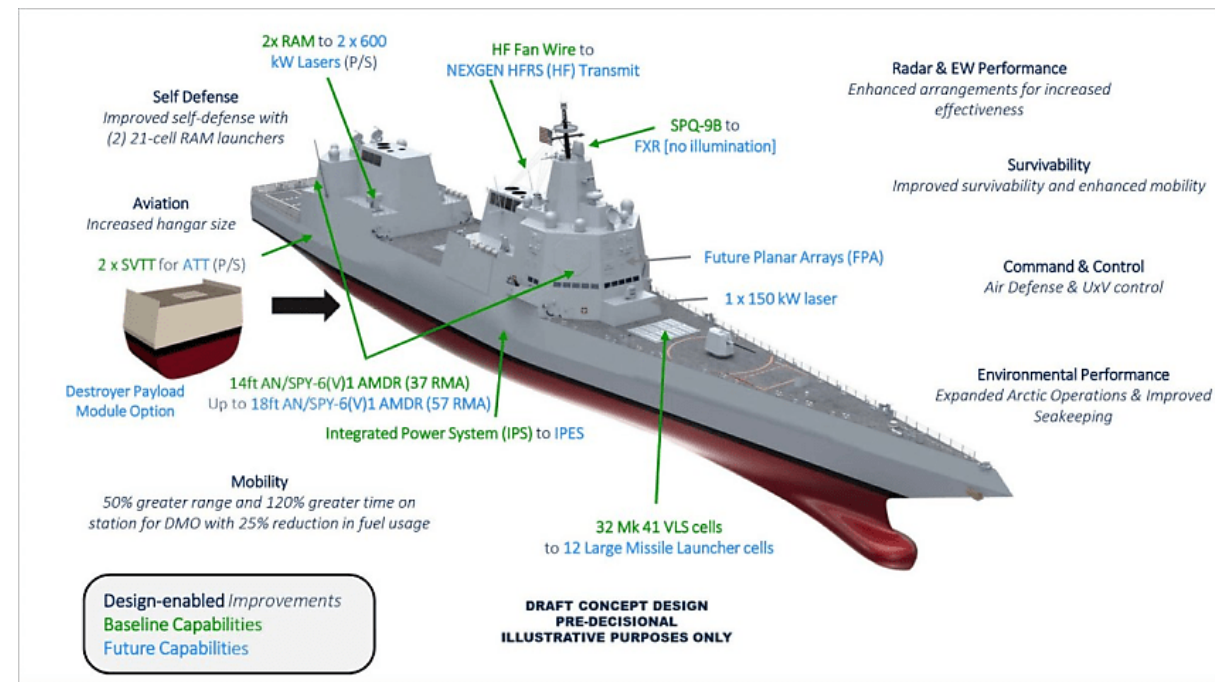
We are gearing up for the official opening of the memorial on the 29th. June 2024 and CMDR Bob Mummery OAM RAN RTD is preparing a list of guests and the service format. I encourage all those who wished to be considered as invitees to the ceremony to register their interest directly with Bob before the end of March to avoid disappointment. His contact details are [bandi@iinet.net.au](mailto:bandi@iinet.net.au)

This week NLWA will be replacing the drill hall fluoro lights to new LED Lighting part of our continued upgrade of the memorial facility.



# Updated DDGX report reveals plans for ‘reduced’ US large surface combatant fleet

By: Stephen Kuper



An updated report to Congress detailing the progress and planning of the US Navy’s next large surface combatant (LCS), the DDG(X), has revealed at least tentative plans for an expanded fleet of large surface combatants to help the US Navy meet its global responsibilities.

Hailing from relatively modest roots in terms of warship design and role, contemporary destroyers have evolved to become formidable surface combatants and the undisputed multipurpose first responders for major navies around the world.

Large hulls, long ranges, and high speeds support a wide variety of mission profiles, from convoy and battle-group escort for high-profile assets like aircraft carriers and amphibious warfare ships to maritime security, land attack, anti-air and anti-submarine defence, destroyers are the core of the navy.

These core roles have further evolved with the advent of increasingly powerful combat systems and advanced weapons systems including ship-mounted lasers and hypersonic missiles, driving the role evolution of destroyers to include things like ballistic missile defence (BMD), while enhancing the already formidable capabilities of these key platforms.

Throughout the Indo-Pacific, destroyers are rapidly being commissioned or transferred to the region to beef up navies and secure key strategic assets, lines of communication and support power projection platforms.

Largely by the growing capabilities of the People’s Liberation Army-Navy (PLA-N) following the introduction of increasingly capable Type 052C and Type 052D guided missile destroyers, culminating in the 13,000-tonne Type 055 destroyers which have prompted many across the Indo-Pacific to begin their own destroyer modernisation fleets.

Both Japan and South Korea have kickstarted plans for increasingly capable Aegis-based guided missile destroyers in the form of upgraded variants of the Sejong the Great Class destroyers in the case of South Korea and two, immense 20,000-tonne, “Aegis System Equipped Vessels” (ASEV) destroyers/cruisers.

Australia has announced plans to acquire [Tomahawk cruise missiles](#), [Naval Strike Missiles](#) and a host of air-launched platforms, like the [Joint Air-to-Surface Standoff Missiles \(JASSM-ER\)](#) and [Long Range Anti-Ship Missile \(LRASM\)](#) as a means of beefing up its anti-surface capabilities, while [BAE Australia](#), [Navantia Australia](#), and a host of other companies have responded by presenting various evolutions of designs to expand the Royal Australian Navy’s lethality at sea.

Meanwhile, across the Pacific, the United States has begun fielding upgraded variants of the venerable Arleigh Burke Class destroyers, with a growing number of Flight II, Flight II/B variants at sea and planned to undergo a range of complex radar upgrades to enhance their combat capabilities.



The US destroyer fleet is further enhanced by the currently growing fleet of Flight III Arleigh Burke Class destroyers which are designed to fulfil the role provided by the retiring Ticonderoga Class cruisers; however, the United States Navy has recognised that Arleigh Burke hull form has reached its power generation and weapons payload capacity.

This level of design maturity and the resulting limitations on the existing hull forms, combined with the growing capabilities of the PLA-N's own fleet of advanced destroyers has prompted the US Navy to begin detailed design work on their next generation of guided missile destroyer, or DDG(X).

### Gathering pace, but 'reduced' LSC fleet

In light of the rapid expansion of Beijing's own naval capabilities, coupled with renewed Russian naval capabilities in the Pacific and Atlantic and the ageing nature of much of the US Navy's large surface combatant fleet, the United States has sought to accelerate the development and acquisition of the DDG(X) platform and, importantly, an expansion of the LSC fleet as a whole.

Highlighting this, the Congressional Research Service [report](#) details the current ambitions of the US Navy for the DDG(X) design, stating, "The Navy's DDG(X) program envisages procuring a class of next-generation guided-missile destroyers (DDGs) to replace the Navy's Ticonderoga (CG-47) Class Aegis cruisers and older Arleigh Burke (DDG-51) Class Aegis destroyers. The Navy wants to procure the first DDG(X) in FY2032. The Navy's proposed FY2024 budget requests US\$187.4 million (AU\$276.9 million) in research and development funding for the program."

Unpacking the long-term implications of this, the CRS states, "The Navy refers to its cruisers and destroyers collectively as large surface combatants (LSCs). The Navy's current 355-ship force-level goal, released in December 2016, calls for achieving and maintaining a force of 104 LSCs. The Navy's FY2023 30-year (FY2023–FY2052) shipbuilding plan, released on April 20, 2022, summarises Navy and OSD studies outlining potential successor Navy force-level goals that include 63 to 96 LSCs."

Serving as a driving force behind this is the aforementioned age of both the Arleigh Burke Class and the Cold War-era Ticonderoga Class (CG-47) of guided missile cruisers, which the CRS details, stating, "The Navy procured 27 CG-47s between FY1978 and FY1988. The ships entered service between 1983 and 1994. The first five, which were built to an earlier technical standard, were judged by the Navy to be too expensive to modernise and were removed from service in 2004–2005. The Navy began retiring the remaining 22 ships in FY2022 and wants to retire all 22 by the end of FY2027.

"The first DDG-51 was procured in FY1985 and entered service in 1991. The version of the DDG-51 that the Navy is currently procuring is called the Flight III version. The Navy also has three Zumwalt (DDG-1000) Class destroyers that were procured in FY2007–FY2009 and are equipped with a combat system that is different than the Aegis system," the CRS report further explains.

Shifting to the planned acquisition number for the proposed DDG(X), the CRS report highlights a planned procurement pace in accordance with "The Navy's FY2024 30-year shipbuilding plan projects LSCs being procured in FY2032 and subsequent years in annual quantities of one to three ships per year."

Cost has also emerged as a major concern for the US Navy as it faces the potential of multiple years of flat or declining budgets, with an expectation that the proposed DDG(X) could cost up to an astronomical US\$3.4 billion per ship, potentially limiting the production run of the ships.

As a transformational platform for the US Navy, it has spared no expense in the design phase for the DDG(X) concept, with a host of ambitious standard design features, with a host of additional through-life upgrades and capability enhancements designed into the hull form from the earliest stages.

This is key to ensuring that the US Navy large surface combatant fleet can qualitatively overmatch any potential adversary.

Yet as transformational as the DDG(X) platform could prove to be, both the CRS and the Congressional Budget Office (CBO) believe this would have major cost implications on an already constrained US Navy budget, with the CRS stating, "The October 2023 CBO report estimates the DDG(X)'s average procurement cost in constant FY2023 dollars at US\$3.2 billion to US\$3.5 billion – about 33 per cent to 40 per cent more than the Navy's estimate (shown in the CBO report) of \$2.4 billion to US\$2.5 billion. The CBO and Navy estimates are about 45 per cent to 59 per cent, and 9 per cent to 14 per cent, respectively, more than the DDG-51's procurement cost of about US\$2.2 billion. The CBO report states that "the Navy's estimates imply that the DDG(X) would cost about 14 per cent more than the DDG-51 Flight III but would have a full-load displacement that is 40 per cent greater. Such an outcome, however, seems unlikely given the history of the Zumwalt Class DDG-1000 guided missile destroyer".



## Final thoughts

The growing realisation is that both the United States and allies like Australia will need to get the balance of its military and national capabilities just right, not just to support the US as part of a larger joint task force, but to ensure that the Australian Defence Force can continue to operate independently and complete its core mission reliably and responsively.

Critically, where much of the commentary around the AUKUS partnership has focused heavily on the design, development, and acquisition of a common nuclear submarine platform, enhancing capability aggregation, driving down costs and expanding the global impact of the alliance — in light of the potential costs associated with developing the DDG(X) Class, combined with transformation technology inclusions like hypersonic weapons provides potential opportunities for allied partnership under the auspice of AUKUS.

This is particularly timely for the partners, while the US has a well-established program, the UK Royal Navy is in the early stages of developing a concept for their Type 86 Destroyer replacement program to replace the Type 45 Daring Class destroyers and Australia's Hobart Class destroyers are relatively young and slated to undergo an extensive modernisation program in the coming years, the timeline for delivery for the DDG(X) intersects perfectly with initial planning stages for the replacement of both the Hobart Class and the Type 45 fleet.

For Australia, this could provide immense opportunity across the shipbuilding enterprise, providing certainty for shipbuilders working on the Hunter Class frigates, enabling them to shift from the Hunter Class to the DDG(X) once the production run has ended.

Doing so would support economic development and also providing the United States with additional avenues for a distributed build to support greater acquisition through the sharing of a common design and the ensuing economies of scale.

This begs an important question: Is it time for Australia to make the request to join the DDG(X) program?



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## TURKEY BLOCKS PASSAGE OF EX-BRITISH MINEHUNTERS BOUND FOR UKRAINE

By **Baird Maritime**



*The Royal Navy Sandown-class Minehunter HMS Grimsby (foreground) is pictured with the Type 23 frigate HMS Monmouth in the Middle East during the international naval Exercise Khanjar Ha'ad, May 10, 2011. (Photo: UK Ministry of Defence/LA(Phot) Stuart Hill)*

The Turkish government has prohibited the intended passage of two ex-UK Royal Navy mine countermeasures vessels to Ukraine via the Turkish straits of the Black Sea. According to a statement issued by the country's Directorate of Communications on Tuesday, January 2, the government has closed the straits to Russian and Ukrainian warships in accordance with Article 19 of the Montreux Convention Regarding the Regime of the Straits. The Montreux Convention was originally signed in 1936 by Turkey, the Soviet Union, and eight other countries to regulate maritime traffic in the Black Sea. The articles of the treaty permit Turkey to close off the Dardanelles and Bosphorus straits to prohibit the movements of foreign naval vessels during war-time or if there is an imminent threat to the country. In the same statement, the government said it has been implementing the convention "impartially and diligently since 1936" to maintain its stance throughout the ongoing war between Russia and Ukraine to prevent the escalation of tension in the Black Sea. The government added that Turkey's pertinent allies have been duly apprised that the minehunting vessels donated to Ukraine by the UK will not be allowed to pass through the Turkish straits to the Black Sea for as long as the war between Russia and Ukraine continues. The vessels that have been denied passage are the decommissioned Sandown-class minehunters HMS *Grimsby* (pictured) and HMS *Shoreham*. The minehunters were donated and were commissioned into the Ukrainian Navy in July 2023, having been renamed *Chernihiv* and *Cherkasy*, respectively, but have yet to reach Ukraine's home waters.

## What is the strength of the Royal Navy?



HMS Westminister watching the Russian RFN Cruiser Marshal Ustinov (Picture: Royal Navy)

The Royal Navy has ships deployed around the globe 365 days a year, and 2024 is going to be no different. With tensions in the Red Sea, deployments to the Indo-Pacific and Russian ships continuously needing to be shadowed, the Royal Navy needs to be at the top of its game.

But what is the strength of the service?

[Heading out for 2024, HMS Richmond sets sail](#)

[HMS Spey leaves Singapore and continues Indo-Pacific security patrol deployment](#)

[Deploy HMS Queen Elizabeth to the Red Sea now, ex-Navy commander says](#)

The Royal Navy has 29,220 full-time, trained personnel – as well as 2,730 reservist personnel.

With [12 different ship classes plus submarines](#), the Royal Navy has a number of personnel deployed on each vessel at any given time. Starting with the largest and most powerful warships ever built for the Royal Navy, [HMS Queen Elizabeth](#) and HMS Prince of Wales can each operate with a crew of 679 but can accommodate up to 1,600 personnel.

Next in size order are the Albion class vessels, HMS Albion and HMS Bulwark – tasked with delivering the punch of Royal Marines by land, sea or air. They can carry six Challenger tanks, or around 30 armoured all-terrain tracked vehicles, with a floodable well dock, as well as four Landing Craft Utility boats. These ships operate with a crew of 325.

Six destroyers make up the backbone of the Royal Navy, designed for anti-aircraft and anti-missile warfare they can operated on a crew of 190.

The Navy has 11 Type 23 frigates, which were originally designed for anti-submarine warfare during the Cold War, which are operated with a 181-strong crew. The Navy also has a specialised fleet of patrol and mine countermeasures vessels.

This includes six Hunt Class vessels looking for mines and lost explosives, crewed by 45 personnel; three Sandown Class ships, clearing UK waters of ordnance, crewed by 37 personnel; and two Cutlass Class vessels, used to patrol naval and territorial waters around Gibraltar, crewed by six personnel.

It also includes eight River Class offshore patrol vessels, designed to secure territorial waters and support law enforcement missions, each crewed by 28 personnel and 16 Archer Class fast patrol boats, each crewed by five personnel, operating across the UK and Europe.

The Royal Navy also has a fleet of submarines.

This is made up of four Vanguard Class vessels, the protectors of Britain's nuclear deterrent, crewed by 132 personnel, and five Astute Class submarines currently in service, with two more set to join the fleet this year, which each take 98 crew.

Finally, there is also one Trafalgar Class submarine, adapted for covert surveillance and inshore reconnaissance, which is crewed by 97 personnel. In total, that means 7,141 Royal Navy personnel are needed to crew the current fleet of vessels.

The Navy's personnel numbers have received a lot of attention lately and, in November last year, a [senior Royal Navy officer called on the service to review its medical standards for people wanting to join](#). Rear Admiral Jude Terry, the Royal Navy's Director of People and Training, said medical provision and technology has advanced, while the service's standards have not changed for more than 20 years.

RAdm Terry was commenting on social media in response to an article which references findings from a Freedom of Information (FOI) request that [Royal Navy recruitment has dropped to its lowest number since 2017](#).



## Government receives audit of Defence estate

By: Reporter



### **The federal government has received the findings and recommendations of an independent, enterprise-wide audit of the nation's Defence estate and infrastructure.**

The government's review prioritised an enterprise-wide audit of the Defence estate and infrastructure in response to the recommendations of the Defence Strategic Review, to assess whether the estate meets Defence's contemporary operational and capability requirements.

The independent review was conducted by Jan Mason, former managing director of Defence Housing Australia, and Jim Miller, chair of the Infrastructure Victoria Board.

Deputy Prime Minister and Defence Minister Richard Marles said, "In the current strategic circumstances, it is more important than ever to ensure the Defence estate remains aligned with our operational and capability priorities, now and in the future."

The independent co-leads visited more than 70 Defence sites across Australia and conducted a series of stakeholder engagements. As part of these visits, the co-leads' inspections included visits to a mix of operational airfields, maintenance facilities, research laboratories, warehouses, training establishments, reserve and cadet depots, and working accommodation.

Assistant Minister for Defence Matt Thistlethwaite expanded on the comments of the Deputy Prime Minister, saying, "Delivery of the independent audit of the Defence estate was no small undertaking."

Key areas of focus for the audit included strengthening the resilience of the Defence estate, mechanisms to accelerate delivery of major infrastructure, climate change risks, and options for consolidation of under-utilised facilities.

"Defence is the Commonwealth's largest landholder and this report and its recommendations will be critical to ensuring the optimisation of the estate to support Defence's future growth and posture," Assistant Minister Thistlethwaite added.

## A double standard? Emphasis on OPV weapons overlooks other undergunned vessels

By: [Stephen Kuper](#)



**The year 2023 was definitely a year of hammering a number of the Royal Australian Navy's major recapitalisation programs, namely the Arafura and Hunter Class, respectively, but for our Navy's major workhorses, the Anzacs and the Cape Class are hilariously undergunned, so why the double standard?**

As the largest island continent on the planet with a maritime jurisdiction of in excess of 8 million square kilometres, Australia, as a nation and a people, is defined by its relationship with the ocean.

Beyond the social and cultural aspects, our relationship with the ocean and our maritime approaches has ranged from angst to anxiety through to hostility and outright apathy as a result of our "tyranny of distance".

This has only become more front of mind since Russia's invasion of Ukraine, the ongoing conflict in the Middle East and the Red Sea, which is responsible for constraining waterways responsible for US\$1 trillion worth of maritime trade every year, never mind China's ongoing brinkmanship and antagonism in the South China Sea.

Recognising the centrality of maritime security and stability, the government's Defence Strategic Review (DSR) reinforced the renewed importance of the nation's maritime security, with the Royal Australian Navy requiring an immense and comprehensive restructuring to optimise the fleet for the future tactical and strategic challenges we face throughout the Indo-Pacific.

In doing so, they have called into question a number of the procurement decisions made by the previous government that are set to shape the future capability of the Royal Australian Navy.

At its core, the DSR emphasises a three-pronged approach to modernising and expanding the nation's maritime combat capabilities, with an emphasis on complementing the nation's future nuclear-powered submarine fleet, with the review calling for "an enhanced lethality surface combatant fleet, that complements a conventionally armed, nuclear-powered submarine fleet, is now essential given our changed strategic circumstances".

This major step change in the thinking of the Navy's mission profile, responsibilities, and implications for force structure have been further influenced by the government's plans to field two distinct tiers that are capable of "enhancing Navy's capability in long-range strike (maritime and land), air defence, and anti-submarine warfare requires the acquisition of a contemporary optimal mix of Tier 1 and Tier 2 surface combatants, consistent with a strategy of a larger number of small surface vessels".

While we all eagerly await the government's response to the findings of their "short, sharp", [Independent Analysis into Navy's Surface Combatant Fleet](#), public debate about the suitability of vessels like the Arafura and Hunter Class for everything ranging from constabulary operations through to high-intensity combat.



Yet, for other surface combatants in service with the Navy, namely the Cape Class patrol boats and our venerable Anzac Class frigates, there seems little to no questioning of their suitability for their roles in this new world.

### **What's good for one has to be good for the other**

In the case of the Arafura Class, much of the public commentary has emphasised the fact that these vessels, despite drawing on an armed reference design, will not be, at least initially, “armed” with a main gun following the cancellation of the 40mm main gun, thus effectively leaving the Arafura Class little more than a lightly armed, battleship grey motor yacht.

Yet at the same time, the new workhorse of our patrol boat fleet, the Austal-designed and built Cape and Evolved Cape Class, is equally undergunned, with nothing larger than a pair of .50 calibre machine guns. In contrast, the Armadale Class boats, at least, had a 25mm Bushmaster chain gun, mounted in a Typhoon weapons mount.

Now I know, I know some will point out that the Arafura's are slated to be fitted with a similar type weapons system as the preceding Armadale Class as an interim option, but for a vessel effectively five and a half times the size to be armed with effectively the same armament as its predecessor is laughable.

Not to be outdone, the Cape Class is effectively an undergunned Armadale Class, so how did we go backwards!?

Equally, why isn't the same vitriol aimed at the Arafura Class directed at the Cape Class?

The reality of this is perhaps best described by retired Rear Admiral Rowan Moffitt, who [stated](#): “If Australia is willing only to fund a brown-water naval combat force, let's be honest about that. Buying brown-water ships and telling our people we have a lethal blue-water capability that can deliver impactful projection and deterrence by denial would be a very expensive delusion.”

### **Final thoughts**

The rapidly deteriorating geopolitical and strategic environment that is transforming the global and regional security paradigm requires a realistic analysis and assessment by Australia's policymakers. Taking shortcuts and ending up with 50 per cent of something, as opposed to 100 per cent of nothing, is an admirable goal, but will ultimately only prove more costly in the long run as we scramble to rapidly develop high-end warfighting capability.

Equally, both the Australian government and the Australian public have to accept and understand that we will need to dramatically increase spending in our national defence and do so over the long term, rather than short-term sugar hits or slights of hand that push money out over the forward estimates and allow inflation to account for “increases” in spending, despite there being little to no new money in real terms.

Addressing this comes back to the government's shift away from a “balanced force” towards a “focused force”, as championed in the Defence Strategic Review. It equally fails to account for the planned increase in ADF personnel by 2040 and places ultimate hope in a series of as-yet-to-be-developed “wunderwaffen” or wonder weapons, like autonomous systems, cyber or tactical weapons like HIMARs and others to provide both “impactful projection” and deterrence against “any potential adversary”.

Again, referring back to retired RADM Moffitt in his previously quoted statement about our brown-water versus blue-water naval capability discussion, this is a conversation that needs to be had in the open with the Australian people, and the implications of pursuing one course of action equally needs to be discussed as ultimately, they will be called upon to help implement it, to consent to the direction, and to defend it should diplomacy fail.

This requires a greater degree of transparency and a culture of collaboration between the nation's strategic policymakers and elected officials and the constituents they represent and serve – equally, this approach will need to entice the Australian public to once again invest in and believe in the future direction of the nation.

**USS MAKIN ISLAND AND  
USS NIMITZ**







## Time to test a ship-based hypersonic missile launcher

By [Diana Stancy Correll](#)

Dec 31, 2023

The guided-missile destroyer Zumwalt arrived at HII in Pascagoula, Mississippi on Aug. 19, 2023 to undergo a modernization period. (HII)

Flight tests using a ship-based hypersonic missile launcher will start in 2024, according to Lockheed Martin. The Navy aims to field [hypersonic weapons aboard the destroyer Zumwalt](#) in 2025, and the ship is currently undergoing a modernization period to install the Navy's Conventional Prompt Strike hypersonic missile system, among other updates. American Shipbuilder HII is outfitting the destroyer with the weapon system in Pascagoula, Mississippi.

"The upgrades will ensure Zumwalt remains one of the most technologically advanced and lethal ships in the U.S. Navy," Cmdr. Arlo Abrahamson, a spokesperson for the Naval Surface Force, told Navy Times in a statement in August.

Lockheed Martin, which is developing the launcher, the weapon control system and other pieces of the missile, announced in February that flight tests would commence in 2024.

# Navy's supercarrier strategy will go on after USS Nimitz is gone

By  
**GARY WARNER**

STARS AND STRIPES • December 31, 2023

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The aircraft carrier USS Nimitz (CVN 68) transits the Puget Sound on the way to its homeport of Bremerton, Wash., July 2, 2023. (Heather C. Wamsley/U.S. Navy)

The USS Nimitz has been the template of American sea power for nearly a half-century.

Commissioned four days after the fall of Saigon ended the Vietnam War in 1975, the 100,000-ton supercarrier powered by two Westinghouse A4W nuclear reactors could set off at 30 knots to trouble spots around the world and catapult 80 attack jets at enemies.

"You don't have to ask anyone's permission to use their bases or provide fuel for your ship — you just go and stay for as long as you need," said Mark Cancian, a retired Marine colonel who is now a senior adviser with the Center for Strategic and International Studies in Washington, D.C.

The Navy would add nine more Nimitz-class carriers to the fleet over the next 34 years. When the Nimitz-class carrier USS George H.W. Bush was commissioned in 2009, the Navy simultaneously retired its last non-nuclear carrier, USS Kitty Hawk.

USS Nimitz is in Puget Sound Naval Shipyard for several months of maintenance before it starts what's likely its final assignment: retirement. It will be followed in regular intervals by its older sister ships.

"Inactivation of Nimitz class aircraft carriers is currently scheduled to begin with USS Nimitz in 2026, subject to Congressional budget approval," said Alan Baribeau, a spokesman for the Office of Corporate Communications at Naval Sea Systems Command.

While the Nimitz may disappear from the fleet, the idea it came to represent — the nuclear-powered aircraft carrier strike force — will live on.



Aircraft carriers USS Gerald R. Ford and USS Dwight D. Eisenhower sail with other U.S. and allied ships in the Mediterranean Sea on Nov. 3, 2023. (Jacob Mattingly/U.S. Navy)

The first ship of a new supercarrier class, USS Gerald R. Ford, is in the eastern Mediterranean as a sign of American support for Israel following the attack by Hamas militants from Gaza. The Chief of Naval Operations Navigation Plan — the sea service's public playbook — says a carrier accompanied by guided missile cruisers, anti-aircraft destroyers and attack submarines is America's top option for quick response to hot spots from the Red Sea to the Strait of Taiwan.

"Nuclear-powered aircraft carriers, which will remain the most survivable and versatile airfields in the world, provide long-range, persistent sea control, power projection and organic sensing in contested seas, as well as flexible options across the spectrum of conflict," the Navy's recently released shipbuilding plan says.

The sentiment isn't shared by all in the Pentagon and Congress. Critics of the carriers' dominance over official debate and dollars include advocates pushing for an increased focus on attack submarines, hypersonic missile boats and Unmanned Surface Vehicles — ships without any crew. In the October 2023 issue of the U.S. Naval Institute Proceedings, retired Navy Vice Admiral David H. Lewis wrote that the Nimitz was a response to the world conflicts of 1975 — mainly the Soviet Union and its proxies worldwide.

"There was a clear adversary to beat," Lewis wrote. "The challenges were less about technology and more about how many, when and where to allocate resources." Cancian says the debate over carriers splits naval strategists into two camps. To advocates, they are "90,000 tons of American sovereignty, deployable anywhere on the globe" while critics see them as soaking up too much of the defense budget for "increasingly vulnerable monuments to a naval age gone by." Carriers are at their best when they stack the odds heavily in favor of the side Americans are on — a role they have played in Iran, Iraq, Syria and the current conflict with [Iranian-backed Houthi rebels firing missiles at shipping in the Red Sea](#).

"I don't think the Houthi missiles can get past a carrier's defenses," Cancian said. "I'm not as sure about an attack by the Chinese." American ships and weapons are likely technologically superior overall to what the Chinese can bring to a battle, Cancian said. But the gap isn't so great that the outcome of a swarm attack by Chinese missile boats and attack aircraft is assured.

According to a Reuters news agency report, China is in the midst of a major naval construction program, with 370 ships, up from 340 just over a year ago. China plans to have 435 ships by 2030. The United States has 291 ships, but their total tonnage is twice the total of China's Navy.

New weapons require new defensive measures or strategies. Underwater drones like those used by Ukraine against Russian ships in the Black Sea can be launched far from the target. Russia says it is developing hypersonic cruise missiles that can evade the ship's anti-aircraft defenses. The possibility of significant battle damage from could lead military commanders to restrict the exposure of a \$14 billion Ford-class carrier with over 4,000 Americans aboard, Cancian said.

While Navy policy backs the continued construction and use of large aircraft carriers, alternatives are part of the future mix. Five American USVs — unmanned surface vehicles — took part in the Integrated Battle Problem (IBP) exercise to develop crewless ships that would operate alongside manned ships in the future. A Navy modernization report called for a 2050 goal of having more than a quarter of the fleet consist of unmanned vessels.

The use of the supercarrier in the mid-21st century will be a question for after the Nimitz is gone. Its designation, "CVN-68," stands for the 68th aircraft carrier commissioned by the Navy since the USS Langley was converted from a coal-carrying transport into CV-1 in 1920. While the Navy has made no official announcement, the federal SAM.gov contracting website has solicited possible subcontractors to work on "CVN 68 Inactivation, Defueling Accomplishment" to be completed by 2030.

## To give someone 'a wide berth'

This is a commonly used phrase, used figuratively to describe keeping a distance from someone or something. It was originally a nautical term, dating back to the early 1600s.

These days, we think of a berth as the place where a ship is moored, however this is not the original meaning.

The word 'berth' was originally derived from 'bearing off'. When sailors were asked to keep a wide bearing off something, they were being told to ensure there was enough 'sea room' - that is, sufficient room to maneuver or to swing at anchor in order to maintain safety and maneuverability.





## Even more US-Australia submarine collaboration on the horizon

By [Megan Eckstein](#)

Dec 30, 2023



The fast-attack submarine Columbia moors alongside the submarine tender Emory S Land at Naval Base Guam in Jan 4, 2023. Emory S. Land will play a key role in building the U.S.-Australia submarine partnership in 2024. (Mass Communication Specialist Seaman Darek Leary/Navy).

The U.S. and Australian navies will see their submarine-specific partnerships grow in multiple ways throughout 2024. The Navy plans to conduct its first-ever submarine maintenance work in Australia this summer using the sub tender Emory S. Land, with 30 Australian sailors embarked to learn how to repair the Virginia class of submarine.

This step will help establish a nuclear-powered attack submarine maintenance capability at the HMAS Stirling naval base in Western Australia in the next few years as part of the trilateral AUKUS arrangement.

U.S. Navy Undersecretary Erik Raven said in 2023 that the service has already taken a number of steps since the March announcement of the AUKUS “optimal pathway,” which lays out three phases: U.S. and U.K. submarines operating out of Stirling; Australia buying and operating new and used Virginia-class submarines from the U.S.; and Australia building and operating its own SSN-AUKUS submarine.

Raven said Australian officers, sailors and government civilians are already in the nuclear training pipeline with the U.S. Navy and are learning attack sub maintenance procedures in Pearl Harbor, Hawaii, and at Barrow-in-Furness, England.

Also in 2024, Raven said the first Australian sailors will be assigned to serve on U.S. submarines, and Australian maintainers will begin performing maintenance at the Pearl Harbor Naval Shipyard as part of their training.

Additionally, the navies will begin buying training systems and simulators that will go to Stirling. To support those plans, Raven urged lawmakers, some of whom were in the audience, to pass as soon as possible four legislative proposals the Navy sent to Congress.

“Current law limits our ability to undertake the next steps of this program,” he said. “Specifically, absent relief, we cannot receive the funds that Australia has committed to invest in the U.S. submarine industrial base; train Australian workers in construction and maintenance for the nuclear submarine industry; sell a Virginia-class submarine to Australia; or modernize our export control systems to execute this ambitious program.”

## Austal USA secures \$1.28bn contract with US Navy

22 DECEMBER 2023

By: Reporter



### **Austal USA has secured a contract for the final design and construction of three Expeditionary Medical Ships from the United States Navy, valued at \$1.28 billion.**

The Expeditionary Medical Ship is a variant of the Expeditionary Fast Transport Ship, designed for patient holding, stabilisation, evacuation, and transport in support of distributed maritime operations.

To date, Austal USA has delivered 13 Expeditionary Fast Transport ships to the US Navy.

According to a release from the shipbuilder, the vessel features a shallow draft that enables the ship to access austere ports, with a flight deck that is able to accommodate the V-22 Osprey and CH-53K heavy lift cargo helicopter, a release from the company read.

“The new Expeditionary Medical Ship further extends the capabilities of the proven Expeditionary Fast Transport (EPF) platform, designed and constructed by Austal, to enable more complex medical procedures and operations to be performed onboard, at sea and underway,” Paddy Gregg, chief executive officer of Austal Limited, said.

“These three new EMS will enhance the US Navy’s capability to provide effective medical and surgical support anywhere in the world, quickly, safely and efficiently.”

The announcement came as Austal has signed a memorandum of understanding with NSW shipbuilder Birdon to jointly deliver the Australian Department of Defence Landing Craft-Medium (LC-M) Project.

Under the agreement, commencing in late November, both companies will develop Defence shipbuilding capability in Western Australia to deliver the LC-M craft, jointly develop a costed proposal for the LC-M Project and explore potential Defence shipbuilding opportunities.

Last month, the federal government announced a heads of agreement to establish a Strategic Shipbuilding Agreement between Austal and the Commonwealth. Austal was named as the preferred vessel constructor, while Birdon was selected as the preferred designer for the LC-M Project.

“Austal has a very good track record of working effectively with third-party vessel designers, and we look forward to working with Birdon to develop the MOU into a more substantive partnership so that we can deliver a capable and cost-effective LC-M program for the Army,” said Gregg.

Birdon chief executive officer Jamie Bruce said the memorandum of understanding signalled the intent of both companies to form a collaborative relationship for the design and build of LC-Ms.

## Government hosts Projects of Concern summit for Arafura Class OPVs

08 DECEMBER 2023

By: Reporter



### **Minister for Defence Industry Pat Conroy met with Luerssen Australia’s chairman, Tim Wagner, and senior officials at a Projects of Concern Summit to discuss the SEA 1180 Phase 1 – Offshore Patrol Vessels Project.**

The meeting was part of the Commonwealth’s ongoing plan to ensure Defence acquisitions get back on track. According to the Minister for Defence Industry, both Luerssen Australia and the government committed to working together to address schedule delays.

The schedule delays surrounding the project first came to light in 2021, with the offshore patrol vessel contract listed as a Project of Concern in October 2023.

The project is observing delays in vessel and support system delivery.

“I thank company representatives and Defence officials for their work today in discussing the Arafura Class offshore patrol vessel project. Top-level focus is essential to ensure we are doing all we can to remediate areas of deficiency,” Minister for Defence Industry Pat Conroy said.

“Defence and our industry partner Luerssen Australia have committed to jointly address the significant schedule delays facing this project. Defence looks forward to working collaboratively with Luerssen Australia to get the project back on track.

“Today’s summit has provided the leadership, commitment, and oversight that is needed to work towards remediate this project.”

It is hoped that the Project of Concern process will remediate challenges facing Defence acquisition, providing ministerial oversight encouraging collaboration between Defence and industry.

The announcement came as Minister Conroy met with Airservices Australia, representatives from defence industry and members of the Department of Defence for a Projects of Concern summit on the Civil Military Air Traffic Management System project.

During the summit, participants agreed to finalise a contract change proposal and an integrated master schedule of the project by early 2024, Defence outlined. The summit was also attended by Minister for Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development and Local Government Catherine King.

Minister Conroy welcomed the progress made during the summit. “I am pleased there has been significant progress on delivering the remediation plan for the OneSKY-CMATS air traffic management project,” he outlined.

“Ministerial engagement through Projects of Concern summits is proving to be an effective way of motivating stakeholders to resolve complex issues. “This is the fourth Projects of Concern summit held by the Albanese Government, demonstrating our commitment to working with industry to get defence projects back on track.”

Minister King said she expected that the project will be able to get “back on track.”



# Hunter Class frigates pass critical design review milestone

By: [Stephen Kuper](#)



## **In a major milestone for the embattled program, BAE has confirmed that the Hunter Class frigates have successfully completed a preliminary design review (PDR).**

The review, which started in July, is a technical assessment that ensures the design is operationally effective and underpins the more detailed work that will now be undertaken.

Since the announcement of the Hunter Class program in June 2018, the workforce has grown with now more than 1,800 people working on the Hunter program, which is transforming Australia's shipbuilding industry by helping build a world-class, continuous naval shipbuilding capability.

Craig Lockhart, [BAE Systems](#) Australia's managing director - maritime, welcomed the announcement and the milestone, saying, "The Hunter Class Frigate Program has come a long way from initial head contract signing to the acceptance of the shipyard, start of prototyping work, and commencement of the first schedule protection block."

The program is described as a truly national endeavour, with companies from across Australia working with BAE Systems to support the manufacture of the first batch of three Hunter Class frigates.

Lockhart added, "The completion of the preliminary design review is another significant step forward for the program, which is developing Australia's sovereign industrial capability and is growing the nation's engineering workforce."

BAE Systems anticipates that the multi-billion-dollar program will create and sustain more than 5,000 jobs at BAE Systems and the wider Australian defence supply chain, including up to 1,000 apprentice and graduate roles.

"Through this national endeavour, we are committed to maximising opportunities for Australian industry. More than 80 contracts have been placed with Australian businesses to support the program," Lockhart said.

This announcement comes following the unveiling of a significantly "[upgunned](#)" variant of the Hunter Class frigate, presented by BAE Systems Australia at the recent Indo Pacific 2023 International Maritime Exposition and Seapower Conference in Sydney.

This new proposed variant would see an expansion of the Hunter's fire power, with an expanded vertical launch system (VLS) capability and the standard 32 VLS growing to 96 VLS with 16 Naval Strike Missile packs also added, and the further potential to grow to 128 with the removal of the five-inch main deck gun.

Lockhart explained to Defence Connect that the "new" proposal would leverage the extensive design work already done on the Hunter Class program, to provide a warship with at least 80 per cent commonality with the "standard" frigate, thus reducing risk to both the government and Navy.

The nine Hunter Class frigates will be based on the BAE Systems Type 26 Global Combat Ship currently under construction for the Royal Navy and will replace the eight Anzac Class frigates when they enter service beginning in the late 2020s.

The Hunter Class is billed as an anti-submarine warfare (ASW) centric vessel delivering an advanced ASW capability to the Royal Australian Navy at a time when 50 per cent of the world's submarines will be operating in the Indo-Pacific region.

BAE Systems Australia announced that it had selected Lockheed Martin Australia and Saab Australia as combat systems integration industry partners, responsible for delivering the Australian-designed CEAFAAR 2 Active Phased Array Radar, Lockheed Martin-designed Aegis combat management system, and Saab Australia 9LV tactical interface.

Centred around the AN/SPY-1 radar, Aegis is a fully integrated combat management system, providing full 360-degree, 3D-tracking capacity. Aegis is capable of simultaneously defending against attack from land targets, submarines, and surface ships while automatically protecting the fleet against aircraft, cruise missiles, and ballistic missiles.

At the end of the program, the Commonwealth will resume complete ownership of ASC Shipbuilding, thereby ensuring the retention in Australia of intellectual property, a highly skilled workforce, and the associated equipment.

SEA 5000 is expected to support over 500 Australian businesses who have been pre-qualified to be part of the Hunter Class supply chain, with the Australian steel industry in particular, benefiting from the 48,000 tonnes of steel required to build the ships.

## 'No final decision' on mothballing HMS Albion and HMS Bulwark



HMS Albion is one of the Royal Navy's two amphibious assault ships (Picture: Royal Navy)

No final decision has been made on whether or not to 'mothball' two Royal Navy assault ships, a defence minister has insisted.

News reports have suggested that HMS Albion and HMS Bulwark could be retired to free up sailors for other vessels, amid a [recruitment crisis](#).

Richard Drax, Conservative MP for South Dorset, told MPs: "One decision he could make to support the defence jobs would be to retain HMS Albion and HMS Bulwark.

"Could he reassure the House and the Royal Marines, and the Royal Navy and the Armed Forces that these two vital ships will be kept and not in operation and not mothballed?"

Defence minister James Cartlidge replied: "What I would say is no final decision has been made on these platforms. "I know there has been a lot of coverage in the press and a lot of chatter inevitably. I know how important they are to our service personnel, but I want to reassure him that we are looking at this in the round.

"But in terms of jobs, we are absolutely committed to supporting defence jobs across the piece."

[HMS Albion and HMS Bulwark](#) are two of the Royal Navy's amphibious assault ships and capable of landing Royal Marines ashore by air and sea.

CDTPO Johnson exemplifies the conduct and behaviours of the Australian Navy Cadets and provides significant positive leadership and contribution across TS Albatross and the greater Waratah Flotilla.

ANC CADET OF THE YEAR





## What makes HMS Albion and Bulwark special – and why Marines would miss them



No decision has been made over whether HMS Bulwark (pictured) and HMS Albion will be mothballed, a minister has said (Picture: Royal Navy)

**While no decision has yet been taken about whether HMS Albion and HMS Bulwark are to be mothballed, Forces News takes a look at what this could mean - and why if this does happen there would probably be a considerable reduction in capability.**

HMS Albion and HMS Bulwark are the Royal Navy's Landing Platform Docks, designed to deliver the punch of the mighty Royal Marines to land by sea or by air.

Mothballing the Albion-class vessels would certainly raise some eyebrows in terms of what this would mean for the Royal Marines - and would likely place the Littoral Response Group (LRG) deployments that the Navy has been championing for the past three years in jeopardy.

The two ships, which are 176 metres long, can carry four big landing craft (Landing Craft Utility - LCU) inside their floodable well docks, plus four smaller landing craft hanging from the sides (Landing Craft Vehicle Personnel - LCVP) - crucial to commando operations.

The Royal Fleet Auxiliary does offer some similar capabilities and with both Albion and Bulwark currently out of action, the RFA's Bay-class Landing Ship Dock (Auxiliary) (LSD (A)) are supporting the deployment and training of Royal Marines.



RFA Lyme Bay is currently tasked with helping move aid supplies bound for Gaza

Bay-class vessels such as RFA Lyme Bay can carry one LCU inside and one or two LCVP on the deck, but these have to be craned on board, making the process much slower.

RFA vessels cannot defend themselves as well, so this is where ships like Albion and Bulwark can make a difference. Marines have been increasingly doing more with the RFA after Bulwark was not ready on time to take over from [\*HMS Albion as she ended her term as the UK's amphibious flagship\*](#).



There have been few updates on Bulwark's return to operations, but the ship did share on social media at the start of December that she had undergone a "partial flood-up", describing it as a "major milestone" in the regeneration programme. Royal Navy sources say many personnel understand HMS Albion, HMS Bulwark and HMS Westminster, a frigate reportedly facing decommissioning, will never come out of Devonport or go on operations again.

#### **What's been said about HMS Albion and HMS Bulwark?**

The Times had previously claimed Albion and Bulwark would be mothballed under Government plans to make up for a shortage of sailors. But defence minister James Cartledge, speaking in the Commons, assured MPs no final decision had been made. And an MOD spokesperson told Forces News: "The Royal Marines Commando Force are highly trained and highly skilled and ready to be deployed globally.

"The landing platform ships continue to be part of the Navy's fleet and they have further amphibious capability through Bay-class ships. "The operational requirements of the Royal Navy are kept under constant review and the Ministry of Defence is committed to ensuring the Navy has the capabilities it needs to meet current and future operational requirements."



HMS Albion has been crucial to Commando Force ops around the world in recent years (Picture: MOD)

#### **What next for the Marines?**

While the prospect of the amphibious assault ships being put into extended readiness would be a blow, it wouldn't be the beginning of the end for the Royal Marines. The world-renowned troops are very busy and are deployed on other Royal Navy vessels like Type 23 frigates, Type 45 destroyers and Offshore Patrol Vessels.

But putting Albion and Bulwark into extended readiness - two ships which were only commissioned in 2003 and 2005 respectively - would put the LRG deployments in jeopardy. HMS Albion has spent recent years leading the Littoral Response Group (North), a force able to deploy across Europe and react to crises and world events. "Littoral" refers to working in coastal regions, which is crucial in getting troops, resupplies and munitions from sea to shore.



Royal Marines, seen here during an invasion exercise, need to be brought to the fight and kept supplied (Picture: Royal Navy)

The work can involve shoreline reconnaissance, inland reconnaissance, delivering lethal strike teams to land and securing an area for humanitarian missions. Operations can be highly dangerous. The Littoral Response Group (South) is currently embarked in RFA Lyme Bay, tasked with moving aid into Gaza. The Navy has been championing the LRG missions in recent years. While RFA vessels could be set to continue supporting Royal Marines deployments, the UK is continuing to work with the Netherlands to develop the next generation of littoral strike platform, the UK Multi Role Support Ships (MRSS). The vessels will be designed for marine landing forces and to operate in amphibious task groups. The ships are expected to enter service in the 2030s.

## TWO CHARGED IN SOUTH KOREA FOR ALLEGED LEAK OF SUBMARINE SECRETS



*ROKS Lee Eokgi, a Jang Bogo-class submarine of the South Korean Navy, underway on July 7, 2010 (Photo: US Navy/Mass Communication Specialist 2nd Class Benjamin Stevens)*

Two people are being charged in South Korea in connection with the unauthorised transfer of classified information about the country's submarines to contacts from overseas. The accused, both former employees of local shipbuilder Daewoo Shipbuilding and Marine Engineering (now Hanwha Ocean), are being charged with violating the Foreign Act and the Trade Secret Protection Act for allegedly supplying Taiwan with details about the South Korean-built DSME 1400 diesel-electric submarines, otherwise known as the Jang Bogo-class.

Local officials told the *Financial Times* that the two individuals are being investigated for supplying dozens of pages of blueprints to Taiwanese state-owned shipbuilder CSBC Corporation. The accused had also established a consulting firm with the aim of supporting South Korea's indigenous submarine construction program. This same firm was fined by a local court in 2023 for the transfer of military-grade equipment to CSBC despite not having been cleared to do so by the Defense Acquisition Program Administration (DAPA).

A DAPA official clarified that the agency's approval must first be secured before local firms can export defence technologies and related products to foreign counterparts. Although Taiwan has its own submarine construction program, the country's first indigenously-built submarine was launched only in late September 2023 and is not scheduled to enter service until 2025. Some officials have expressed concern about the unauthorised transfer of confidential information pertaining to the submarines, as Seoul has no formal diplomatic relations with Taipei and the incident might lead to additional friction with mainland China.

# Halifax Shipyard Launches Canada's Fifth AOPS

By Editor

DEC 9, 2023 [#Amherstburg](#), [#AOPS](#), [#Bedford Basin](#), [#Halifax Shipyard](#), [#HMCS Frederick Rolette](#), [#NSS](#), [#Upper Canada](#)



The Royal Canadian Navy's fifth Arctic and Offshore Patrol Ship (AOPS), the future HMCS Frederick Rolette, was launched today, December 9, 2023, at Halifax Shipyard.

The launch of the fifth of six AOPS for the Royal Canadian Navy, marks a significant milestone for Canada's National Shipbuilding Strategy (NSS) and the revitalization of the Royal Canadian Navy's combatant fleet. A full two months ahead of schedule, the 103-metre future HMCS Frederick Rolette transitioned from Halifax Shipyard's land level facility to a submersible barge on December 8 and launched in the Bedford Basin today.

The ship, constructed by over 2,400 shipbuilders, is now pier side at Halifax Shipyard where work continues in preparation for sea trials and handover to the Royal Canadian Navy in September 2024. Inside Halifax Shipyard's facilities, the Royal Canadian Navy's sixth AOPS, the future HMCS Robert Hampton Gray and the first AOPS variant for the Canadian Coast Guard are under construction, with work progressing as planned.

A generation of shipbuilders will deliver six AOPS for the Royal Canadian Navy, two AOPS for the Canadian Coast Guard, and 15 Canadian Surface Combatant ships for the Royal Canadian Navy as part of the NSS. "The launch of future HMCS Frederick Rolette is another milestone achieved on our mission to deliver ships for Canada," said Dirk Lesko, President, Irving Shipbuilding Inc.

"I'm proud of the teamwork that delivered this result". Charles Frederick Rolette was born in Québec City on September 23, 1785, and joined the Royal Navy as a midshipman while a young teen. He distinguished himself during the War of 1812, earning a reputation as a bold and quick-thinking officer. The historical Canton of Rolette, located on the south shore of the St. Lawrence River, roughly 50 km southeast of the town of Montmagny, Québec, near the American border, was established in 1868 in his honor.

Just before the outbreak of the War of 1812, Rolette was posted to Amherstburg, Upper Canada (now Ontario) as Lieutenant in command of the brig General Hunter. When word of the outbreak of war reached Amherstburg on July 3, 1812, Rolette acted immediately, capturing an American vessel, the Cuyahoga, before the American crew even realized that their country had declared war on Britain. This was the first action of the War of 1812 and a significant prize as the Cuyahoga carried the American commander General William Hull's papers and dispatches.

This provided the British with significant early intelligence on American strength and deployment. At a time when it was not yet customary to award medals to military personnel in recognition of conspicuous gallantry, Lieutenant Rolette was mentioned in dispatches by senior military officers on several occasions during the war. At the capture of Detroit, Major-General Isaac Brock praised Rolette's conduct in the highest terms: "I have watched you during the action," said the general, "you behaved like a lion, and I will remember you."



## Unidentified drone shot down over HMS Queen Elizabeth during visit to Sweden



HMS Queen Elizabeth was in Gothenburg for seven days last October (Picture: Royal Navy)  
An unidentified drone was shot down over aircraft carrier HMS Queen Elizabeth by the Swedish armed forces during the vessel's visit to the country, it has emerged. The incident happened when the Royal Navy flagship was in Skandia Harbour in Gothenburg for seven days last October.

The visit was part of a cooperation effort between the UK and Sweden, both being members of the Joint Expeditionary Forces. The aerial device entered the protected airspace over the aircraft carrier, according to the head of operations command in the Swedish armed forces, Carl-Johan Edström.

[She's back: HMS Queen Elizabeth returns to UK after Nato deployment](#)  
[HMS Queen Elizabeth fends off submarine 'attack' during exercise with Norwegian navy](#)  
[HMS Queen Elizabeth brought under Nato command for first time](#)

The Swedish armed forces would not comment on exactly how the drone had been eliminated, but did say there was no indication of any foreign involvement or malicious intent. The incident is being investigated by the police and Swedish armed forces.

The Ministry of Defence has been contacted for comment. HMS Queen Elizabeth's [deployment to the North Sea](#) in the autumn saw her [come under Nato command](#) for the first time. The carrier arrived back in Portsmouth having travelled nearly 13,000 nautical miles. Her deployment saw her take part in a [mock game of cat-and-mouse](#) with a Norwegian submarine playing the aggressor in the North Sea. She also pioneered a wide range of health and wellbeing initiatives while deployed to northern Europe with Nato.



## US Navy prepares to sell littoral combat ships

By: [Robert Dougherty](#)



### The US Navy is preparing to offload two of its Independence Class littoral combat ships into the foreign military sale market during the financial year 2024.

The USS *Jackson* (LCS-6) and USS *Montgomery* (LCS-8) are part of a significant decommissioning plan laid out in a *Report to Congress on the Annual Long-Range Plan for Construction of Naval Vessels for Fiscal Year 2024*, prepared by the US Office of the Chief of Naval Operations and released on 30 March this year.

The LCS-6 was commissioned in 2015 and LCS-8 in 2016, making them the oldest-serving vessels in their class. The high-speed trimaran design was originally promoted as a small and multipurpose warship designed to operate in nearshore engagements as a light frigate and patrol vessel.

The report indicates both ships are excess to needs and neither has completed lethality and survivability upgrades.

“A total inventory of 17 Independence Class LCS leaves the Navy with two of those ships as excess to need supporting the wrong mission set (outside mine countermeasures and surface warfare),” the report said.

“These two ships will be replaced with new Independence Class ships that are delivering in the FYDP with more capability.” The report recommends the decommissioning of a total of 11 ships in FY2024, including three decommissioning after their expected service lives.

These include guided missile cruisers USS *Antietam*, USS *Leyte Gulf*, USS *Cowpens*, USS *Shiloh*, and USS *Vicksburg* and the recycling of Los Angeles Class submarine USS *San Juan* and the dismantling of Island Class dock landing ships USS *Germantown*, USS *Gunston Hall* and USS *Tortuga*.





# 2023 Year in Review: A global order in turmoil, a mixed bag for Australian defence

19 DECEMBER 2023

By: Reporter



**It has been a big year at home and abroad, with war still raging in eastern Europe and a new conflict bubbling away in the Middle East providing a glimpse into what the future multipolar world looks like. For Australian defence, it has also provided renewed urgency to get our house in order, explains senior analyst Steve Kuper.**

There is no escaping that the world is running full tilt towards a number of concurrent regional conflagrations, whether an expansion of the Russia-Ukraine war or the Middle East conflict, which has been reignited by the Hamas attack on Israel on 7 October, or the potential for armed conflict in South America or in the western Pacific.

The Albanese government's Defence Strategic Review and shift towards developing a ["Focused Force"](#) and emphasising ["National Defence"](#) has proven immensely prescient as the post-Second World War order increasingly strains under the emergence of a new, multipolar world.

For Defence Connect's senior analyst, Steve Kuper, 2023 has left us with more questions than it had answered, "2023 has definitely been an interesting year for Australia's defence and national security ecosystem, both in isolation at home, and more importantly abroad with the increasing deterioration of global stability and security".

"The ongoing conflict in Europe, coupled with the increasing deterioration of circumstances in the Middle East, South America and the western Pacific, mainly the South China Sea and around Taiwan, has really reinforced the need for Australia to take its own defence and capabilities more seriously," Kuper said.

In recognising this, the government's Defence Strategic Review identified six "priority areas for immediate action" designed to secure Australia in this era of great power competition and rising multipolarity, including:

- Acquisition of nuclear-powered submarines through AUKUS to improve our deterrence capabilities.
- Developing the Australian Defence Force's (ADF) ability to precisely strike targets at longer range and manufacture munitions in Australia.
- Improving the ADF's ability to operate from Australia's northern bases.
- Initiatives to improve the growth and retention of a highly skilled Defence workforce.
- Lifting our capacity to rapidly translate disruptive new technologies into ADF capability, in close partnership with Australian industry.
- Deepening of our diplomatic and defence partnerships with key partners in the Indo-Pacific.



# BAE secures US\$255m Anzac Class gun upgrade contract

By: Reporter



**BAE Systems** has been awarded a US\$255 million (AU\$379.6 million) contract from the Australian government to upgrade existing Mk 45 Mod 2 naval gun systems on Anzac Class frigates with a Common Control System.

The upgrade modifies existing Mk 45 systems to eliminate obsolescence issues and extend the life of the gun system. The Common Control System (CCS) upgrade replaces electronics on earlier Mk 45 Mod 1 and Mod 2 gun systems to make them compatible with the Mk 45 Mod 4, the latest configuration used by the US Navy.

Additionally, the upgrade will equip the Anzac Class' Mk 45s with the capability to integrate future extended-range precision guided munitions, such as the hypervelocity projectile.

Brent Butcher, vice-president of weapon systems at BAE Systems, said, "The Common Control System upgrade is the most cost-effective way to extend the life of Mk 45 gun systems, enabling them to provide critical ship naval fires and creating a configuration that allows for the integration of future precision-guided munitions."

The cost-effective CCS upgrade ensures that Mk 45 gun systems remain supportable for decades to come and ready to integrate the latest, most innovative technology features to support advanced munitions and future mission capabilities for a significantly lower cost than a new gun.

"We are committed to modernising and equipping allied nations with enhanced Mk 45 gun systems to address current and future threats," Butcher added. Work on the contract will take place at the BAE Systems production facility in Louisville, Kentucky, with the first delivery planned in early 2026.

The Mk 45 system Mod 4 incorporates a host of major upgrades, including a 62-calibre barrel, strengthened gun and mount subsystems, advanced control system enhancement, and a reduced signature, low-maintenance gun shield.

These improvements provide naval surface fire support (NSFS) at ranges of more than 20 nautical miles (36 kilometres) with the new five-inch US Navy-developed cargo projectile and an improved propelling charge. BAE Systems has delivered over 280 shipboard applications to the US Navy and 11 fleets across the globe. Full life cycle support is keyed to the customer and can be supplemented by the worldwide logistics system supporting the US Navy.



# *Interested in Australia's Future?*

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*Junior Members of the Navy League of Australia Western Australia Division aged between 16 – 18 years of age Subscription \$15.00 (includes \$1.36 GST) (Proof of age required)*

*Subscriptions are due on 1<sup>st</sup>. July in each year, and your membership will be current to 30<sup>th</sup>. June immediately following the date on which you join the league, except that if your first subscription is received during the period 01<sup>st</sup>. April to 30<sup>th</sup>. June in any year, your initial membership will be extended to 30<sup>th</sup>. June in the following year.inc*

*Subscription \$35.00 (including \$3.18 GST)*

*Bank details: National Australia Bank*

*BSB: 086918 A/C: 293707180*

*Navy League of Australia WA Division*

The Navy League of Australia Western Australia Division – **Membership Application**

I wish to be come a member of the Navy League of Australia, the objects I support.

Name: [Mr] [Mrs] [Ms] [Rank] .....

Street: .....

Suburb: ..... P/Code .....

Phone: ..... Mobile: .....

Email: .....

Signature: ..... Date: .....

Please email or post your application to the below address.

*PO Box 735*

*Fremantle WA 6957*

*Bandjoneill.1@bigpond.com*



## HMAS PERTH (I) MEMORIAL FOUNDATION INCORPORATED

### MEMBERSHIP / DONATION APPLICATION (*cross out which is not applicable*)

Name	<table><tr><td>First</td><td colspan="2">Surname</td></tr></table>			First	Surname	
First	Surname					
Address						
Suburb		State	<table><tr><td></td><td>P/C</td><td></td></tr></table>		P/C	
	P/C					
Email		Phone				

Reply to: [secretary@hmasperth1memorial.com.au](mailto:secretary@hmasperth1memorial.com.au) (*Preferred*)

OR

Hon Secretary  
HMAS Perth (I) Memorial Foundation Incorporated  
PO Box 735 Fremantle  
Western Australia 6959

Membership Fee

**\$35.00**

Banking Details: Bank West  
BSB: 302-162 A/C: 1499868

*Where possible please email applications / donations with a bank receipt*

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I wish to donate the following amount to THE HMAS PERTH (I) Memorial Building Fund

My details have been included in the above portion of the form

DONATION

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Get Out There! If you're into adventure, you'll get as much as you can handle as an Australian Navy Cadet. You'll get to go sailing, hiking, canoeing and camping. Plus you'll learn everything about seamanship. From navigational training to Naval signals and communication.

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NAVY LEAGUE OF AUSTRALIA, GPO Box 1719, Sydney NSW 2001

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PHOTOS by LEUT David Nicolson RAN RTD  
And CMDR Jim O'Neill ANC RTD>