



NAVY LEAGUE OF AUSTRALIA
WESTERN AUSTRALIA

June 2024
Volume 8, Issue 06

DOWN THE VOICEPIPE *do you hear there!*

COMING UP

NLWA Executive meeting
Monday 07th. October 2024

Facility open each Wednesday morning 0900-1200

The NLWA and HMAS PERTH (I) Memorial
Foundation will conduct their AGM's follow-
ing each other on the 25h. August 2024
commencing at 1000

HMAS WARRAMUNGA



Navy League of Australia Western Australia Division News update



Last newsletter I advised that our AGM would be held on Sunday 11 August, unfortunately due to circumstances beyond our control we have had to postpone this a couple of weeks. The AGM is now being held on Sunday 25 August 2024, commencing 10:00 hours. I look forward to seeing you there. We will be providing refreshments on the day and as such need fairly accurate numbers to ensure we have enough for all.

Membership renewals will soon fall due and by the time of reading this edition you may well have your renewal fees invoice and could have even paid them. In keeping with our online model, renewals will follow the same process as last year; the invoice will be emailed to you and you can simply do a funds transfer into our account. As previously advised via email the new amount due will be \$50 per member and although this is an increase it must be noted that fees have not increased in many, many years. We believe that the \$50 still represents value for money and as always, we encourage you to be as involved in the WA Division as you want to be.

Relating to the above sentence of being as involved as you want to be, I'd like to remind you that we have a few functions throughout the year, our AGM, member appreciation luncheons, charity sporting activities and we also have a travel group of about twenty or so people who head away into the country to discover new towns, new museums and put a few dollars into the local community. Our facility is open most Wednesday mornings for anyone interested to have a look over or possibly make use of our reasonably stocked library. Ultimately, there is something available for most, all you have to do is come along. Speaking of outings, sixteen of us are heading to the Northam RSL shortly for the annual Christmas in July lunch which is always a fun day out.

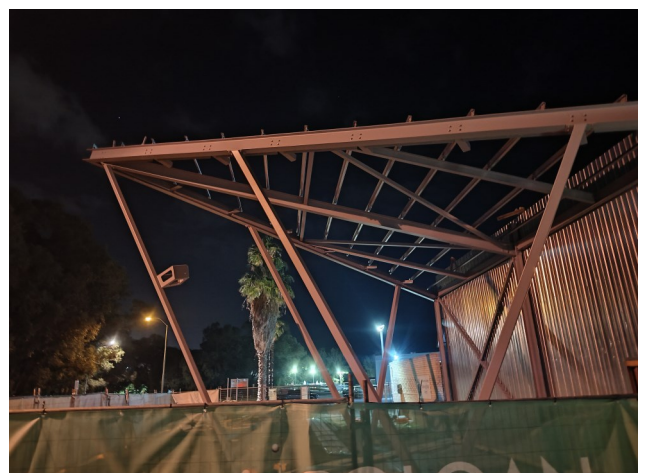
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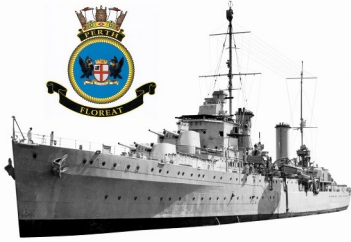
Brad





Recently we had visitors from Queensland and Victoria visit the memorial. From L-R Mrs Johnstone Vic, Daryl Gargett Qld, Bob Mummery, Mike Bailey, Pete Johnstone Vic, Geoff Heaney and Trevor Vincent. Our visitors were very impressed with the memorial and both parties gave generous donations to the Memorial Fund.





HMAS PERTH (I) MEMORIAL UPDATE

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



Jim O'Neill
CMDR ANC RTD
Project Manager

We continue on in the progress of the final stage of the memorial. This month the roof has been installed and preparation works for the installation for the glass is taking shape for the glass to be installed later this month. With the effort CMDR Bob Mummery has been doing going out to former ship mates he has been raising much needed dollars to complete the complex.

This month courtesy of Lisa O'Malley member for Bicton we received back from the framers The white ensign that was flown from HMAS PERTH (I) during the fiftieth anniversary of the sinking.

Lions international are working with us to have the model of HMS AMPHION transported from the UK and also looking to transport the starboard anchor of HMAS PERTH (II) delivered from Albany to the memorial. We have just enough funding to complete the outside of the memorial however further funding is required to outfit the internal stages of the memorial including landscaping , Wall panelling ,ceiling and lighting.

Mike Bailey our President is working towards extra grants and donations to complete this part of the memorial in readiness for the opening on the 1st. March 2025. Our honorary engineer Dave Green is working closely with contractors to ensure the construction is completed as per the specifications. CMDR Bob Mummery is also planning to issue registrations of interest for those who wish to be included in the opening ceremony in mid October.

HMAS Perth (I) memorial in East Fremantle nearing completion



L-R; HMAS Perth I Memorial (Design concept) - The metal work for stage 2 nears completion - Joanne White, a graphic designer with Cooling Brothers and Matthew Rosveare casting an eye over a completed glass panel

ANYONE driving, running or walking their dog along Riverside Road in East Fremantle will notice an interesting new structure taking shape next to the Swan River Yacht club.

It is the second stage of the memorial to HMAS Perth (I) that was lost in the Battle of Sunda Strait in March 1942.

The first section of the memorial was completed last year. This stage has a granite remembrance wall with the names of all who served on Perth. Mounted on a compass rose in front of the wall is a half-size replica of Perth's propeller. Five flag poles complete the first stage of the memorial.

The second stage represents the bow of HMAS Perth (I) and will eventually be clad in printed glass panels showing different aspects of the life of the ship and her gallant crew. Also included will be an image of USS Houston, the American cruiser that was lost in the same battle with great

loss of life.

The memorial was designed by Joan and Charley Smith who also created the iconic HMAS Sydney (II) memorial in Geraldton.

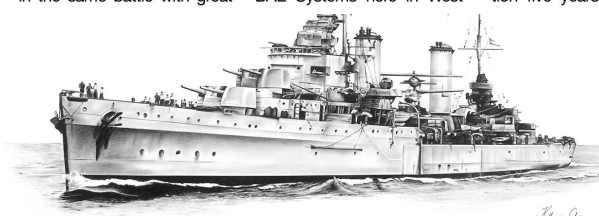
All the metal work design and fabrication for the second stage was donated by BAE Systems here in West-

ern Australia and the printed glass work has been done by Cooling Brothers at their workshops in High Wycombe.

The chairman of the HMAS Perth (I) Memorial Fund, Mike Bailey, said: "It is so pleasing to see the memorial finally taking shape from its inception five years ago. Funding

from federal, state and private donations have made this significant memorial to the ship, those who perished and those who survived, become a reality".

Completion of the second stage should be done by the end of July with the official opening later in the year.





is reported that on June 21, at the Australian Osborne Naval Shipyard in Osborne, a ceremony was held for the first cutting of steel and the start of construction for the Australian Navy of the lead Hunter frigate based on a modified design of the British Type 26 frigate. The Australian Navy now plans to build six Hunter-class frigates, and a contract for the first three of them (Hunter, Flinders, Tasman) are signed with BAE Systems Australia. The lead frigate Hunter is expected to enter service only in 2034, and the sixth ship of this type in 2044. Photo (c) Australian Department of Defense



MISSION CAPABILITY

- Hull designed for low acoustic signature, combined with advanced sonar systems and the MH-60R combat helicopter results in a highly capable anti-submarine platform.
- Combination of Aegis CMS, CEAFAR and the Standard Missile II and Evolved Sea Sparrow Missiles will result in a highly capable air warfare platform.
- Able to support amphibious task groups and conducted surface warfare through medium calibre gun and advanced anti-ship missiles with a coastal suppression capability.
- Self-defence with short range guns and close in weapons systems.
- Networked and highly capable in electronic warfare.
- Flexible mission bay provides capacity to embark containerised stores for humanitarian assistance and disaster relief, additional seaboats for constabulary tasks and capacity for unmanned systems and an additional helicopter.

PRINCIPAL WEAPONS AND SENSORS

- Australian CEAFAR2 Phased Array Radar
- Aegis Combat Management System and Saab Australian interface
- Electro-optic sensors
- Ultra S2150 Hull Mounted Sonar
- Thales S2087 Towed Array and Variable Depth Sonar Systems
- Mk41 Vertical Launch System with SM2 and ESSM
- Mk45 Mod4 127mm Medium Gun
- 2 x 20mm Close in Weapons Systems
- 2 x 30mm Short range gun
- MU90 Torpedos
- Advanced Anti-ship missiles
- Australian Nulka missile decoy system
- Electronic countermeasures

PROPULSION

- Combined Diesel Electric or Gas (CODLOG)
- 2 x electric motors
- 4 x high speed MTU Diesel Generators
- Rolls Royce MT30 Gas Turbine
- 2 x Fixed Pitch Propellers
- Top speed in excess of 27 knots
- Range in excess of 7000 nautical miles at cruising speed

ACCOMMODATION

Approximately 180 crew including embarked flight, with accommodation and services for up to 208

MAIN DIMENSIONS

- Length 149.9 metres
- Beam 20.8 metres
- Full load displacement approximately 8800 tonnes

AVIATION

- 1 x MH60R combat helicopter
- Mission Bay can store additional helicopter or unmanned systems

SYSTEMS

The Aegis Combat Management System, together with an Australian interface, which will be developed by SAAB Australia.

The combat system combines the ship's navigation systems, internal and external communications systems, and various sensors and weapons capabilities with associated computer network, integrated by the combat management system. Integration between the combat management system and the sensors and weapons of the vessel allows for the greatest capability that can be derived from the system.

MORE INFORMATION

- Future Frigate program: http://www.defence.gov.au/casg/EquippingDefence/SEA5000PH1_FutureFrigates
- Australia's Naval Shipbuilding Plan: <http://www.defence.gov.au/navalshipbuildingplan/>
- BAE Systems: <https://ournavfuture.com.au/>





First Australian submarine workers on AUKUS training at Pearl Harbor

[23/06/2024](#) [Posted by Brian Hartigan](#)

The first cohort of skilled submarine workers from ASC have deployed to the USA for comprehensive sustainment training on nuclear-powered submarines.

FILE IMAGE: *Artists concept of a possible SSN-AUKUS, Australia's future nuclear-powered submarine. Image supplied.*

Around 30 skilled ASC Pty Ltd workers are the first to deploy to the Pearl Harbor Naval Shipyard to directly participate in training in the maintenance of US Virginia-class nuclear-powered submarines alongside their US counterparts.

These ASC workers from South Australia and Western Australia comprise mechanical fitters and electricians as well as electrical, mechanical and safety engineers and submarine maintenance and battery crew. Minister for Defence Richard Marles said this was another exciting step towards Australian workers acquiring the knowledge and knowhow that will be essential to build, operate and sustain Australia's future nuclear-powered submarines.

"These international placements reflect the strength of the AUKUS partnership and follow the government's announcement in March that it had selected ASC as a strategic partner in the sustainment and joint build of conventionally-armed, nuclear-powered submarines in Australia, starting with the sustainment of the Virginia-class," Mr Marles said.

"In total, more than 100 Australian shipyard workers at ASC are expected to depart by mid-2025 for naval propulsion skilling at Pearl Harbor. "Once they have completed their overseas training – a mix of classroom and on-the-job learning – they will take up key roles in Western Australia as part of Submarine Rotational Force-West, where they will lead the sustainment of rotating US and UK nuclear-powered submarines.

"They will also pass on their skills and train other ASC workers through their lead roles." One UK Astute-class submarine and up to four US Virginia-class submarines will be involved in a rotational presence through Submarine Rotational Force-West. ASC employees already have decades of combined experience maintaining Australia's Collins-class submarines, which will continue operating as Australia transitions to its future nuclear-powered submarine capability. "This is another exciting step when it comes to developing the workforce we need for the AUKUS program which presents a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity for Australians to take advantage of unique and exciting education, training and career development programs, both here and overseas," Mr Marles said.

"These highly skilled workers already have decades of combined submarine experience having sustained our Collins class submarines and now have the opportunity to be upskilled by our US counterparts in sustaining nuclear-powered submarines. "Such unique education and training opportunities for Australian workers reflect the rock-solid commitment of our US and UK partners to our nation-building AUKUS program."



The evolution of warfare in the 21st century has ushered in an era of cyber conflicts, [artificial intelligence](#) and autonomous systems. Those technological advances have fundamentally altered the nature of military engagement, demanding a profound shift in the skills and capabilities of modern armed forces.

For the Australian Defence Force, this paradigm shift presents a daunting challenge: a widening skills gap that threatens to undermine its ability to fulfil the ambitious objectives outlined in the 2023 Defence Strategic Review and the 2024 Defence Portfolio Budget Statements. The ADF is hemorrhaging skilled people to the civilian sector. It must rebrand itself as a modern, technologically advanced organisation that offers challenging and rewarding careers and use targeted recruitment to get the tech skills that it needs.

Competitive remuneration must also be part of the solution. So should career flexibility and, for people already in the services, training to meet new technological challenges. While the 2016 Defence white paper acknowledged the need for technological adaptation, the ADF's response has been sluggish and insufficient.

The white paper accurately predicted the rise of cyberwarfare, AI and autonomous systems. However, its vision for a technologically adept ADF has not been realised. A 2021 report by the [Defence Science and Technology Group](#) revealed a 'critical shortage' of personnel with qualifications in science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM), particularly in cybersecurity and software engineering. That lack of expertise hampers the ADF's ability to leverage emerging technologies and leaves it vulnerable to sophisticated cyberattacks.

The traditional military model, with its emphasis on hierarchical structures and long training cycles, is ill-suited to attract and retain highly skilled tech talent, so the ADF is losing skilled people to the civilian sector. The talent drain is exacerbated by the increasing demand for those skills in the civilian sector, driven by the rapid growth of Australia's digital economy, which is projected to reach A\$315 billion per year over the next decade.

The war in Ukraine highlights the [need to adapt](#) to the technological realities of modern warfare. The effective use of commercial off-the-shelf technologies, such as drones and satellite imagery, by Ukrainian forces underscores the need for a military workforce that's agile, adaptable and proficient in rapidly integrating new tools and tactics. The war has also highlighted the devastating impact of cyberattacks on critical infrastructure and the importance of information warfare in shaping the narrative of conflict.

The AUKUS pact, with its focus on advanced capabilities such as nuclear-powered submarines and hypersonic weapons, further intensifies the pressure on the ADF to close its skills gap. The pact's success hinges on the seamless collaboration and technological interoperability of the three partners. However, if the ADF lacks the necessary expertise, it risks becoming a liability, hindering the pact's full potential. As John Blaxland, professor of international security and intelligence studies at the Australian National University, succinctly puts it, 'AUKUS is a wake-up call for the ADF to invest in the skills and capabilities that will be essential for the future of warfare.'

Many of our allies and like-minded nations are making significant strides in military technology and innovation. The US invests heavily in attracting top STEM talent and fosters a culture of innovation within its armed forces. Israel, renowned for its technological prowess, has seamlessly integrated cutting-edge technologies into its military doctrine.

In contrast, Australia's progress in adapting to the digital age has been slow and incremental. The ADF's chief, General Angus Campbell, acknowledged that in a 2021 speech, stating, 'We are not moving fast enough in embracing new technologies and ways of operating.' That lag could undermine Australia's ability to effectively collaborate with allies and deter potential adversaries. A 2022 report by the Australian Industry Group noted that 83 percent of businesses in the defence industry sector are experiencing skills shortages, further emphasising the depth of the challenge.

The rapid rise of China, combined with the ADF's reliance on advanced technology for everything from communications and intelligence gathering to the operation of sophisticated weapons systems, makes the skills gap an existential threat to Australia. In a conflict, the lack of technical expertise could severely hamper the ADF's ability to operate effectively, leaving the nation vulnerable to cyberattacks, disinformation campaigns and other forms of asymmetric warfare. If the status quo persists, the consequences for Australia's defence posture are dire. The ADF's operational effectiveness would be severely hampered, its ability to deter potential adversaries would be weakened, and its capacity to respond to emerging threats would be compromised. The growing skills gap could erode public confidence in the ADF's ability to safeguard the nation, leading to a loss of morale within the ranks and a decline in recruitment.

The ADF's image problem is a significant barrier to attracting the tech-savvy talent it desperately needs. The traditional perception of military service as primarily focused on combat roles is outdated and unappealing to many young Australians with the skills that the ADF requires. To compete with the private sector, the ADF must rebrand itself as a modern, technologically advanced organisation that offers challenging and rewarding career opportunities in a variety of fields, including cybersecurity, data science and AI. The rebranding effort should emphasise its commitment to innovation, its role in protecting Australia's national security and the opportunity to make a meaningful contribution to society.

The way forward: a bold call for action

The ADF's skills gap is a complex challenge that demands a bold and comprehensive response. This includes:

—*Targeted recruitment*: Actively seek out people with in-demand skills, not just those who fit the traditional mould of a soldier. Cast a wider net and look beyond the usual recruitment channels, including by targeting universities, tech companies and even the gaming community.

—*Flexible career paths*: Create more flexible career paths that allow for lateral movement and specialisation, enabling personnel to develop their skills in areas of interest and relevance to the ADF's evolving needs. This could involve offering shorter, more focused training programs, as well as opportunities for sabbaticals and external training.

—*Competitive compensation and benefits*: Offer competitive salaries and benefits packages that are commensurate with the skills and expertise required in today's military. This includes not only financial incentives but also flexible work arrangements, professional development opportunities and a supportive work environment.

—*Upskilling and reskilling*: Invest in comprehensive training programs that equip existing personnel with the skills needed to thrive in a technologically advanced environment. This includes partnerships with industry and academia to leverage their expertise and resources. It also requires a commitment to lifelong learning and a culture that values continuous improvement.

—*Culture of innovation*: Foster a culture of innovation and experimentation that encourages personnel to embrace new technologies and develop novel solutions to complex challenges. This involves empowering individuals to take risks, tolerate failure and learn from mistakes.

The time for complacency is over. The ADF must act decisively and urgently to bridge its skills gap and ensure its relevance in the 21st century. The stakes are too high to ignore.

Andrew Horton is the chief operating officer of ASPI. Image of Able Seaman Combat Systems Operator Haimish Kilner monitoring a combat system console aboard HMAS Warramunga: [Leo Baumgartner/Department of Defence](#).

**FINAL STAGE OF THE HMAS PERTH (I) Memorial
under construction completion due early
October 2024**





US submarine tender visits Sydney

29/06/2024 [Posted by Brian Hartigan](#)

More than 500 United States Navy officers, sailors and civilian mariners will enjoy the sights of Sydney in the coming days following the arrival of the submarine tender USS Emory S. Land for a port visit.

CAPTION: *United States Navy submarine tender, USS Emory S. Land arrives at Fleet Base East, Sydney, as part of its Australia tour. Photo by Warrant Officer Shane Cameron.*

The 198-meter-long ship berthed at Fleet Base East, Garden Island, for its third port visit in Australia, following visits to Darwin and Cairns.

This tour forms part of a Western Pacific deployment providing expeditionary maintenance and logistics support to US Navy and allied partner vessels in support of the US 7th Fleet – the US Navy’s largest forward-deployed fleet.

USS Emory S. Land is also the temporary home to 17 Royal Australian Navy officers and sailors embedded with their US counterparts as part of a knowledge and training exchange to build skills and experience in nuclear-powered submarine maintenance. Emory S. Land was greeted in Sydney by United States Chargé d’Affaires Erika Olson, accompanied by Deputy Commander Australian Fleet Commodore Ray Leggatt.

Commodore Leggatt said it was a pleasure to welcome the crew of the USS Emory S. Land to Fleet Base East in Sydney. “This deployment embodies our longstanding friendship and alliance with the US, and is an exciting step forward to developing the Royal Australia Navy’s workforce in support of Australia’s future nuclear-powered submarine capability,” he said.

“It is an incredible opportunity for our Royal Australian Navy officers and sailors to train and learn from our US Navy partners.” Ms Olson said the visit by Emory S. Land was another example of the US and Australia’s regular joint military activity in which our two forces shared valuable skills, knowledge and experience. While in Sydney, the crew of the ship will enjoy the city’s most iconic landmarks and renowned hospitality while participating in various community-engagement and cultural activities, including volunteering at a food bank and playing soccer with local teams.



Australia slashes participation at RIMPAC

28/06/2024 Posted by Brian Hartigan

Approximately 320 Australian Defence Force personnel have joined 28 international partners to undertake the world's largest international maritime exercise.

CAPTION: *HMAS Sydney arrives in Joint Base Pearl Harbor-Hickam, Hawaii in preparation for Rim of the Pacific 2024. Photo by Leading Seaman Daniel Goodman.*

Held across training areas in and around the Hawaiian Islands from 27 June to 1 August, Exercise Rim of the Pacific (RIMPAC) 2024 is a biennial international military exercise hosted by Commander US Pacific Fleet. This year's ADF contribution has been limited to one ship and one aircraft, down from 2022's three ships, two aircraft, mine-warfare and clearance-diving capabilities, and a Joint Landing Force led by 2RAR – for a total contingent of 1600 personnel.

Royal Australian Navy's Hobart-class guided missile destroyer HMAS Sydney and a Royal Australian Air Force P-8A Poseidon will represent Australia. Chief of Joint Operations, Lieutenant General Greg Bilton, said Australia's participation in RIMPAC reflects the closeness of our alliance with the United States and the strength of our military relationships with other regional defence partners. "We face complex strategic challenges in the Indo-Pacific region, and the ADF will take every opportunity to assure our friends that Australia has the ability and the intent to stand by its alliances, agreements and bilateral relationships," Lieutenant General Bilton said.

This year, RIMPAC will feature 29 nations, 40 surface ships, three submarines, land forces from 14 national land forces, more than 150 aircraft and approximately 25,000 personnel. RIMPAC24 Commander Australian Contingent, Air Commodore Louise desJardins said ADF personnel would exercise across a broad spectrum of scenarios from humanitarian assistance and disaster response to maritime security operations, sea control and complex warfighting.

"This year marks the first time HMAS Sydney will participate in RIMPAC, the ship and her crew will be evaluating capabilities in training and live-fire exercises," Air Commodore desJardins said.

"[The Royal Australian] Air Force will deploy one P-8A Poseidon aircraft to contribute to high-end warfighting capabilities in realistic maritime scenarios aimed at enhancing interoperability.

"RIMPAC is a great opportunity for Australia to strengthen international partnerships and improve readiness for a wide range of potential operations."



With the continuing [implementation](#) of AUKUS Pillar 1, it's imperative that the culture of the budding Australian nuclear navy is built with care. Failure to lay the cultural foundation now would risk creating a force that's undermanned, overworked and unprepared for conflict. Strong leadership will be required to reduce the chances of the poor retention rates seen by both the [US nuclear navy](#) and the [Royal Navy](#) from establishing themselves in the Royal Australian Navy.

Asking the correct questions is imperative. What's the ideal selection process for nuclear personnel? What should the community's guiding principles be? What support is most needed for the personnel to thrive?

Given the complex technical and interpersonal requirements for running nuclear-powered submarines, leadership needs to meld excellent engineering acumen with exemplary emotional intelligence. The US Navy's selection process hinges almost entirely on a series of technical interviews in which nuclear officer candidates complete complex mathematics and science problems, but that doesn't capture interpersonal skills. A possible solution would be to select only sailors who have already completed an engineering tour for follow-on nuclear training and posting. Having their captain's endorsement and a strong performance history would minimise the variabilities in their leadership skills.

Should there be additional psychological health screenings for all nuclear personnel? What's the best way to balance diversity goals with the need for personnel with science, engineering and mathematics backgrounds, given the relative [lack of diversity](#) in enrolment? Inadvertently creating an old boys club would weaken the community, but attracting top-performing talent from a smaller selection pool will be difficult.

Even years after leaving the US nuclear navy, sailors can rattle off the seven principles that shaped their professional lives: formality, forceful watchteam backup, procedural compliance, integrity, a questioning attitude, level of knowledge, and ownership. Are those the right guidelines for the Australian navy? What would they mean in an Australian context? The ultimate goal of nuclear propulsion is to provide reliable power no matter the tactical circumstances, and the expectation is that all systems will be functional. When the power plant operates well, engineers are practically invisible. When they get any attention, it's often due to degradations and inoperable systems. That can create negative feedback loops that drive down morale and, ultimately, retention.

This is why creating an ethos of silent service is the key to the nuclear navy. Engineers will work harder, longer and for less thanks than most of the crew. There's no avoiding that, but, with the right principles, it can become a source of pride and foster a culture of comradery and mutual support that will prove invaluable in operating and maintaining the power plants. Those principles should be simple and incorporated into every stage of training to ensure the widest uptake.

A comprehensive review of current support practices, including mental health management, can identify the strengths and weak points within the system as it stands. Offering large retention and recruitment bonuses, as the [Australian Defence Force](#) has recently done and as the US and Royal navies have been doing for years, provides only temporary financial support. How does the Australian navy recruit and maintain readiness for its sailors who may be more at risk? The pool of eligible naval recruits is shrinking as the incidence of [mental health](#) issues trends upwards. This complicates the induction of sailors for some of the most arduous mental conditions within the forces. There's already a [growing need](#) to provide mental health support to currently serving personnel. One potential way to support nuclear submariners would be a rigorous ombudsman program to alleviate sources of stress about family left ashore. Another would be incorporation of basic psychological care into leadership programs. Also, continuing education, certification and professional development are vital.

Getting this right will boost recruitment and retention, but will also set sailors up for success upon leaving the service. Given Australia's current lack of nuclear engineering jobs outside of the navy, this will be instrumental in demonstrating whole-of-life support to the sailors. What the Australian navy should be doing right now is examining how best to develop its nascent nuclear personnel so that they become a pillar of the ADF. The chance to build the nuclear culture and community from the ground up shouldn't be squandered. There's much good to be drawn from the US, British and Australian military experiences, but this is a chance to take the good and leave out the bad. To do that, people must be selected with care and diligence. The principles that provide daily guidance and form the core of the nuclear community's professional pride must be clearly established from the outset. Adequate support to not only maintain the community but to enable it to thrive is vital.

Eric Lies, a US Navy nuclear-propulsion veteran, is an analyst in ASPI's Washington office. Image of the first three Royal Australian Navy graduates of the the US Navy's Submarine Officer Basic Course (left to right, Lieutenant Commander Adam Klyne, Lieutenant William Hall and Lieutenant Commander James Heydon): [US Navy](#).



Williamstown's shipyard hits the slipway with a price tag of \$200m

The Sydney Morning Herald

NICOLE LINDSAY | JUN 21, 2024

Williamstown's shipyard, the last of its kind in Victoria, is for sale eight years after the last vessel plunged down the slipway and ship-building ceased at the 16.81-hectare site. The vacant yard with gantries, workshops and warehouses at 2-10 Nelson Place has a price tag that could hit \$200 million.

Better days: a Navy ship in the Williamstown shipyards in 2015. Photo: Paul Jeffers Set between the Williamstown Marina and the Mobil refinery's fuel tanks, it is just three kilometres from the Port of Melbourne, the country's biggest container port.

Williamstown, a seaside village in Melbourne's west with a historic waterfront and city views, is a highly desirable residential location. AV Jennings has built apartments across the road from the shipyard, but the site is likely to remain industrial for the foreseeable future. British military hardware and technology giant BAE Systems has owned the yard since 2008, after it bought Sydney-based infrastructure company Tenix for \$775 million.

The entire shipyard could fetch as much as \$200 million depending on the configuration of the sale. The site, comprising three pieces of land, is being offered to buyers with two options. The first option – a 9.9-hectare lot with two jetties and a host of buildings, and a 1.9-hectare car park on Battery Road – could sell for between \$80 million and \$100 million.

However, if the deal includes an adjoining 5-hectare parcel with 10 workshops and offices, it could reach that \$200 million price point.

- Related: The apartments created by Harry Seidler that are like a 'vertical village'
- Related: Mirvac set to sell two office towers at discounts of more than 20pc
- Related: 'Private AI' surge powers Equinix's \$240m data centre expansion

BAE Systems is considering either leasing or retaining the 5-hectare freehold. The company did not respond to a request for comment.

The Williamstown shipyard dates back to the 19th century and includes the heritage-listed Alfred Graving Dock built by Victoria's government between 1864 and 1873 at a cost of more than £300,000. The dock, which enabled ship repairs, was the biggest infrastructure project undertaken by the government at the time and was of international importance, according to local and naval history sources.

The site was also the original location of the Victorian Navy, which predated the Federation in 1901. Shipbuilding started in 1913 and was taken over by the Commonwealth during World War 1. Known as HM Naval Dockyard, it remained under the control of the Federal government until Transfield – later known as Tenix – acquired the site in 1987.

Victoria's historic role in the nation's shipbuilding industry eroded over the last decade before finally ending in 2017 when the Turnbull government ploughed money into shipyards in Adelaide and Perth. Under the AUKUS program, any new submarines built in Australia will be built in Adelaide.

CBRE agents Chris O'Brien, Andrew Bell, Trent Hobart and Tom Hayes are handling the sale.



VESSEL REVIEW: The Royal Australian Navy (RAN) has taken delivery of an autonomous surface vessel (ASV) as part of a broader project that seeks to expand the service's autonomous systems capability. PBAT 'Sentinel' is the former Armidale-class patrol boat ex-HMAS 'Maitland', which was retired from RAN service in 2022 and was rebuilt under the Patrol Boat Autonomy Trial (PBAT) program.

Austal Australia, which was responsible for the conversion work on 'Sentinel' as well as the earlier construction of the vessel itself, is also one of the collaborators in PBAT. The aim of the program is to establish robotic, automated, and autonomous elements on a patrol boat, providing a proof-of-concept demonstrator for optionally crewed or autonomous operations for the RAN into the future. The trial will also explore the legal, regulatory pathways and requirements of operating an autonomous vessel at sea.

'Sentinel' underwent its conversion at Austal's shipyard in Henderson, Western Australia. The modifications included the fitting of a variety of monitoring and control systems and technologies that enable autonomous and remote operations. There were also modifications incorporated to the bilges, CCTV, and electrical systems. Sensors and computer units were also added to inform and host an autonomous control system.



Australian recovery equipment to rescue stranded Fiji Guardian Class patrol boat

By: Robert Dougherty



The stranded vessel being assessed by air assets. Photo: Republic of Fiji Navy

Australian recovery equipment is being supplied to the Republic of Fiji Navy to free a donated Guardian Class patrol boat, RFNS Puamau.

RFNS Puamau reportedly became grounded on a reef while undertaking its maiden voyage with the navy, following hand-over under the Australian government's Pacific Maritime Security Program. It's understood Australia has sent specialised recovery equipment to Fiji to help free the vessel that is reportedly semi-submerged. Efforts are also reportedly being made to minimise environmental impacts such as from an oil spill. "As salvage operations begin at Fulaga, the Republic of Fiji Navy reaffirms its commitment to minimising environmental impact during the de-fueling process now underway," according to a public statement published by the Republic of Fiji Navy.

"Measures to mitigate a potential oil spill have been deployed, and Navy divers and engineers on scene continue to monitor the situation. "Concurrently, arrangements are being made to transport specialised recovery equipment from Australia, which was flown into the country last night, via a second salvage vessel. This equipment will be used in the recovery of the vessel from the reef.

"The RFN expresses gratitude to the Australian Government and the Pacific Maritime Security Program for their continuous assistance. We also extend our appreciation to the Vanua of Fulaga and to fellow mariners transiting through Fulaga, highlighting the longstanding tradition of mutual aid among seafarers in times of need." It's understood that the recent grounding incident occurred during a two-week patrol tasking by the navy. No crew members have been reported as injured.

In a show of transparency surrounding the ship rescue operations, the Republic of Fiji Navy is providing regular updates about the incident and the nature of salvage operations. The Republic of Fiji Navy previously confirmed that the area of the Fulaga passage is providing challenging conditions.

"The challenging conditions of Fulaga passage underscore the need for thorough planning and proactive measures with salvage experts to address any potential contingencies," a public statement said.



"Additional recovery equipment and resources are being mobilised, including specialist equipment from overseas, to facilitate the safe removal of fuel and stores before initiating vessel extraction from the reef. The bulk of salvage resources are anticipated to arrive by the weekend, and a team of Navy divers and engineers continue to monitor the vessel.

"To those offering encouragement during this challenging time, we express our sincere appreciation. "The circumstances leading to this regrettable incident will be comprehensively investigated and necessary due process will be undertaken so an understanding can be achieved on what transpired and how it can be avoided. We kindly seek your understanding and patience as we reaffirm our primary objectives: prioritising safety, minimising environmental impact, and ensuring the vessel's safe recovery." According to an announcement by ship manufacturer-

er Austal Australia in 2022, a single 39.5-metre steel hull Guardian Class patrol boat from the company can cost around \$15.2 million.

UK to retire two Type 23 frigate

May 22, 2024, by Fatima Bahtić

During Sea Power Conference 2024 in London, UK Defense Secretary Grant Shapps revealed that two Royal Navy's Type 23 frigates will be retired.



HMS Argyll; Credit: Royal Navy

As informed, the vessels in question are Type 23 frigates HMS Argyll and HMS Westminster. HMS Argyll has been sold to BAE Systems and will be used within the UK's shipbuilding sector, supporting apprentice training in line with the government's agenda on skills and shipbuilding capacity. The vessel was launched in 1989, and it was the longest-serving Type 23 frigate.

HMS Westminster, which was launched in February 1992, will also be decommissioned. The vessel was known throughout the Royal Navy as 'the capital ship'. In 2014, HMS Westminster underwent an extensive refit which resulted in a new principal weapon: the Sea Ceptor surface-to-air missile system

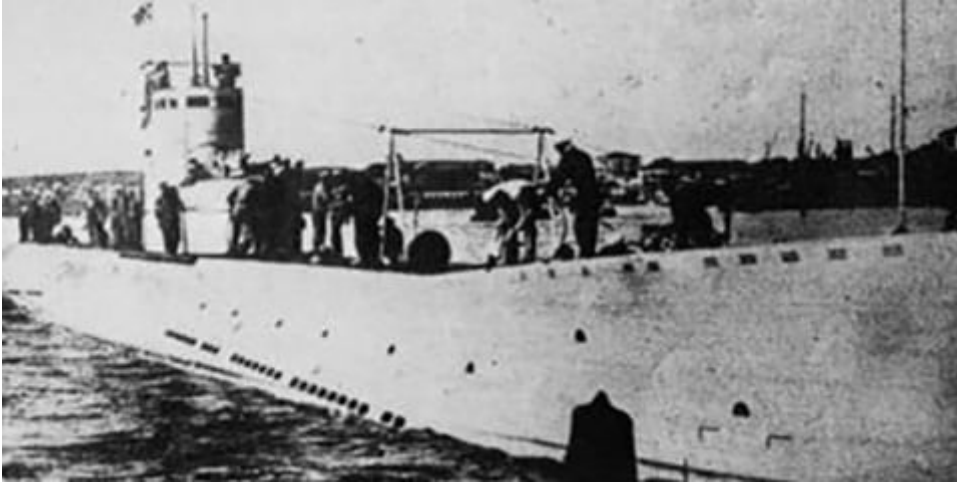


HMS Westminster; Credit: Royal Navy

The First Sea Lord said: *"I pay tribute to the sterling service of the two Types 23 frigates that were announced for retirement today – collectively they have deployed worldwide, conducted dozens of live operations, and have far surpassed their expected service life."* *"While always sad to pay off such fine warships, their decommissioning marks the next stage of our reinvestment in new, more modern frigates."*

UK recently revealed that six new amphibious warships are to be built for the Royal Marines operations. The new multi-role support ships (MRSS) will be able to deploy on a wider variety of operations, and designed to carry vehicles, aircraft, insertion craft and a broad range of uncrewed systems for complicated missions. This brings the total number of UK-built ships and submarines in the pipeline to benefit the Royal Navy to up to 28, with Type 26 and Type 31 in Scotland, Astute and Dreadnought submarines in Barrow-in-Furness, and fleet solid support ships in Belfast and Devon.

Russia resumes search for submarine lost in World War II



A Soviet Navy Leninets-class submarine, date unknown (Photo: Russian Government archives)

[Baird Maritime](#)

Published on:

18 Jun 2024,

The Russian Ministry of Defence has confirmed that an expedition has been launched to attempt to locate a Soviet Navy submarine that was lost off the northern coast of Japan in the closing weeks of World War II. Russian Navy hydrographic ships will begin combing the waters of La Perouse Strait between Japan and the Sakhalin region with the aim of finding the wreckage of the Leninets-class submarine *L-19*.

The submarine's crew last made radio contact in late August 1945, just days following Emperor Hirohito's announcement of Japan's surrender to the Allies to bring an end to the hostilities. An earlier attempt to locate the wreck was made in 2006. However, this expedition found only a freighter and the US Navy Gato-class submarine USS *Wahoo*, which was lost along with its entire crew as a result of a Japanese air attack in October 1943.

The search for *L-19* will focus on the western portion of La Perouse Strait, which is where the submarine's crew last reported their position. The submarine, along with its entire 62-strong crew, was lost due to still unknown causes on its first and only wartime patrol since entering service in 1939.

Future US Navy towing and salvage ship to honour Narragansett Tribe of Rhode Island



Rendering of a Navajo-class towing, salvage and rescue ship (Photo: US Navy)

[Baird Maritime](#)

Published on: 19 Jun 2024,

A future US Navy Navajo-class towing, salvage, and rescue ship (T-ATS) will be named USNS *Narragansett* in honour of the Narragansett Native American Tribe of Rhode Island, US Secretary of the Navy Carlos Del Toro confirmed on Tuesday, June 18. The naming selection of the future *Narragansett* follows the tradition of the Navajo-class of naming towing, salvage and rescue ships after prominent Native Americans or Native American tribes.

The Navajo-class T-ATS will provide ocean-going tug, salvage, and rescue capabilities to support fleet operations. It will replace and fulfill the capabilities that were previously provided by the US Navy's Powhatan-class fleet ocean tug (T-ATF 166) and Safeguard-class rescue and salvage ships (T-ARS 50) class ships.

As with its sisters, the future *Narragansett* will be built as a multi-mission platform that will be deployed to support a range of missions such as towing, rescue, salvage, humanitarian assistance, oil spill response, and wide-area search and surveillance operations using unmanned underwater vehicles (UUVs) and unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs). The T-ATS will be operated by the Military Sealift Command.



HMAS Sydney on four-month Pacific deployment

20/06/2024 Posted by Brian Hartigan

HMAS Sydney has departed for its regional presence deployment – the Australian Defence Force’s continued commitment to regional security.

CAPTION: *HMAS Sydney sails out of Sydney Harbour to conduct a regional presence deployment. Photo by Leading Seaman Daniel Goodman.*

The Hobart-class guided-missile destroyer with its embarked MH-60R Seahawk helicopter and crew of approximately 200 personnel was farewelled by loved ones at Fleet Base East 10 days ago [but only announced today].

During the four-month deployment, HMAS Sydney will participate in the world’s largest international maritime exercise, Exercise RIMPAC, as well as Exercise Pacific Dragon and Operation Argos – the Australian Defence Force’s contribution to international efforts to enforce United Nations Security Council sanctions against North Korea.

HMAS Sydney will also conduct activities with regional partners aimed at improving cooperation, interoperability and interchangeability. RIMPAC 24 will combine some 40 surface ships, four submarines, 14 national land forces, more than 170 aircraft and approximately 25,000 personnel from 30 nations, offering a unique training opportunity while fostering relationships crucial for regional security.

Commander Joint Force Maritime Component Commodore Jonathan Ley said regional presence deployments demonstrated Australia’s commitment to engaging closely with allies and partners as part of maintaining a near-continuous presence in the Indo-Pacific region. “I wish the commanding officer of HMAS Sydney, Commander Grant Coleman, and his crew all the very best as they go forward representing Australia on this important deployment,” Commodore Ley said.

Commander Coleman said the crew were looking forward to the privilege of representing Australia at Exercise RIMPAC and throughout the rest of their deployment. “Representing Australia at the world’s biggest international maritime exercise and in the many other activities ahead of us is a huge privilege,” Commander Coleman said.

“The importance of this deployment and the responsibility we shoulder as we take the baton of duty from HMAS Hobart is not lost on myself or HMAS Sydney’s crew.”

HMAS Sydney will return to Fleet Base East, Sydney, in October.

Australia orders two additional Guardian-class patrol boats from Austal

June 24, 2024, by Fatima Bahtić

The Australian Government has ordered two additional Guardian-class patrol boats from Austal Australia.



Austal

The 39.5-meter, steel-hull patrol boats, to be constructed at Henderson in Western Australia are in addition to the 22 Guardian-class patrol boats previously ordered by the Australian Government. Australia has previously ordered the ships under the Pacific Patrol Boat Replacement Project (SEA3036-1). The vessels are slated for delivery in 2026.

The value of the contract is A\$39 million (\$25.8 million). Nineteen of the 22 vessels have been delivered to twelve Pacific Island nations under the Australian Government's Pacific Maritime Security Program since 2018.

"Of the 30 vessels Austal Australia has delivered since 2018, 19 have been Guardian-class Patrol Boats for the Australian Department of Defence. These vessels were designed and constructed by our team here in Western Australia, with the support of our highly capable supply chain partners," **Paddy Gregg**, CEO of Austal commented.

The patrol boats are faster than the previous Pacific-class patrol boats, with improved seakeeping, better amenities, and an enhanced mission capability, including an integrated RHIB stern launch and recovery system, according to Austal. The Pacific Patrol Boat Replacement Project (SEA3036-1) was awarded to Austal Australia in May 2016, with additional contract options awarded in April 2018 and October 2022.

Critical Undersea Infrastructure Network

By Editor

JUN 11, 2024 [#Critical Undersea Infrastructure Network](#), [#Jens Stoltenberg](#), [#NATO](#)



Troll A offshore natural gas platform off the west coast of Norway

Leading experts from across the Alliance met at NATO Headquarters on Thursday (23 May 2024) for the first meeting of NATO’s new Critical Undersea Infrastructure Network. With rising challenges to undersea infrastructure, the Alliance is putting in place new tools to enhance the security of undersea cables and pipelines and to monitor potential threats.

NATO has warned for years about the security of undersea cables and Allies increased naval patrols near critical subsea infrastructure following recent incidents in the Baltic Sea. Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg, who opened the conference, said Allies must continue to step up. “The increasing dependency of our societies on undersea infrastructure means we need to do more to enhance their security,” said Stoltenberg. “NATO is well-placed to take on a greater role given our Allies’ unique military capabilities, vast intelligence network, and operational expertise,” he said, underlining that Russia is carrying out an intensifying hybrid campaign against Allies.

At the meeting, participants discussed ways to enhance information-sharing and situational awareness, as well as ways to deter and defend against threats to undersea infrastructure. They talked about using innovative technologies to enhance infrastructure security and resilience, including for the growing number of offshore wind farms that underpin the energy transition. The Alliance also continues to promote technological innovation – such as sea drones, new sensors and the use of AI – to better detect suspicious activity.

The one-day meeting follows the decision by NATO Defence Ministers in February 2024 to stand up the Critical Undersea Infrastructure Network. Allies are also establishing a Maritime Centre for the Security of Critical Undersea Infrastructure within NATO’s Maritime Command (MARCOM) in Northwood, UK. Thursday’s meeting was chaired by David van Weel, Assistant Secretary General for Innovation, Hybrid and Cyber. Industry representatives, including energy operators, also attended.

Experts warn UK needs a larger, more lethal Royal Navy in face of mounting global challenges

26 JUNE 2024

By: Stephen Kuper



HMS Prince of Wales leading the UK Carrier Strike Group and multinational naval forces (Source: UK MOD © Crown copyright 2024)

Despite workforce and budgetary pressures, a group of UK experts have urged the next British government to rapidly begin expanding the Royal Navy to better protect Britain’s global and regional interests, with some similarities to our own plans, but still lessons for us to learn.

As both an island nation and one of history’s greatest naval powers, the United Kingdom and its Royal Navy are a shadow of their former glory. Where once the Royal Navy sailed the world’s oceans, dominant and peerless, the Royal Navy, much like the Royal Australian Navy, serves now as a boutique fighting force designed largely for the post-Cold War era of stability guaranteed by the United States.

For the most part in the three decades post the collapse of the Soviet Union, the Royal Navy could get away with being a largely small, bespoke force employing a small number of high-impact platforms both above and below the waves. However, Russia’s invasion of Ukraine, originally in 2014, and the growing reach of a resurgent Russian Navy, coupled with Beijing’s increased antagonism in the South China Sea and increasing hostility in international waters, has prompted successive British governments to re-evaluate its place in the world.

Beginning with the Johnson government’s “[Global Britain](#)” strategy, calling for a return to the Far East by the British, with the Royal Navy to run point on the nation’s strategic pivot to the Indo-Pacific and re-emergence as a global naval power. However, much like the Royal Australian Navy, the [Royal Navy](#) has been plagued by a myriad of project delays, [cost overruns](#), cancellations and [workforce challenges](#) undermining the capability of the fleet to project the United Kingdom’s interests and project British power abroad.

In response, William Freer and Dr Emma Salisbury, for the Council on Geostrategy, prepared a report, titled [A more lethal Royal Navy: Sharpening Britain’s naval power](#), detailing a plan for reshaping the Royal Navy to better prepare it to face the strategic challenges of the coming decades.

Dual strategies: Sea control v sea denial

At the forefront of the proposal by Freer and Salisbury is the rapidly shifting global and regional balance of power and the increasing naval capability of peer competitors like Russia and China, coupled with the increased capability of emerging powers and non-traditional, asymmetric challenges (think Houthis). This combination of factors has prompted both Freer and Salisbury to fundamentally rethink the way the Royal Navy has been structured, its priorities, and the capability/platform mix and thinking that has shaped the Royal Navy for the better part of the last three decades, with a shift towards a dual strategy of sea control and sea denial.

Delivering this capability requires a rethink of the mission the Royal Navy will play, with Freer and Salisbury explaining, “The Royal Navy’s force design should be determined by a combination of threats to the nation, the nation’s resources, and the nation’s interests ... given Britain’s location, the Royal Navy’s primary focus should be on the Euro-Atlantic, working with NATO allies to enact sea control. Sea control is achieved when a navy is able to establish a persistent, or even permanent, maritime presence which deters rivals from confrontation.”

Successfully delivering sea control as described by Freer and Salisbury depends largely on the opponent the Royal Navy would be facing in that instance, to this end, they stated, “Depending on the capability of the country in question, the objectives it wants to achieve, and the strength of its adversaries, sea control can be enacted locally, regionally, or even globally.”

Shifting to the second component of the proposed strategy for the Royal Navy, Freer and Salisbury advocate for an Indo-Pacific-centric strategy of sea denial which they detailed as, “Meanwhile, in the Indo-Pacific, the Royal Navy should contribute to sea denial – which necessitates capabilities to prevent a rival navy from operating with impunity (i.e., from establishing sea control). This can be achieved in multiple ways including by threatening sea-based assets from land, the use of naval mines, and deploying naval forces themselves (usually larger numbers of smaller vessels).”

This combination of strategies has similar themes to the findings in Australia’s own [Independent Analysis of Navy’s Surface Combatant Fleet](#) which highlighted the shifting role that the enhanced lethality surface fleet would play in delivering the nation’s “strategy of denial in Australia’s northern approaches through the flexible application in time and space of naval power projection, sea control and sea denial”.

Perhaps most interestingly is the recognition by Freer and Salisbury that in spite of the geographic divergence of the two operating environments and the proposed strategies, there isn’t a necessity for the Royal Navy to effectively field two distinct, separate fleets, with the pair stating, “Although the Royal Navy needs to support two regional postures, it does not necessarily need two separate fleets. Naval platforms are inherently flexible (due to the variety of systems they can host), and most of those operated by the Royal Navy can contribute to both postures to varying degrees.”

Responding to the reality of not having enough ships

However, this reality, coupled with the modernisation of adversary’s capabilities with growing fleet sizes, necessitates an expansion of the Royal Navy’s fleet, both above and below the waves. Freer and Salisbury detailed this, saying, “The current posture was largely designed over a decade ago, when geopolitical competition was less severe. What required only a single ship or two in 2010 or 2015 will require potentially several by the 2030s or 2040s. And the UK does not have enough.”

So what exactly are Freer and Salisbury proposing to address the dual strategies outlined above and to address the critical hull shortage that dramatically impacts the capability of the Royal Navy, both in the Atlantic and Middle East, but also in the Indo-Pacific?

It is equally important to recognise that for both countries, while there is an emphasis on forming a “integrated” and “focused” force, platforms remain important components of a “system-of-systems” approach to developing a contemporary “integrated” and “focused” naval force. Beginning with the Royal Navy’s silent service, which is made up of both the Cold War-era Vanguard Class ballistic missile submarines and the Astute Class attack submarines, Freer and Salisbury stress expanded investment in the Dreadnought Class ballistic missile submarine facilities to accelerate the production run and ensure continued viability for the UK’s nuclear arsenal.

Freer and Salisbury also advocate for the Dreadnought Class to be fully equipped with a full complement of Trident II or successor missiles and warheads to amplify British strategic power given the growing importance of nuclear deterrence. In addition to this, the pair advocate for the acquisition of a fifth Dreadnought Class converted to cruise missile submarine to expand the conventional strike capabilities of the Royal Navy.

This final point is designed to keep the UK submarine industry’s workforce active, avoiding a repeat of the issues that faced the UK submarine force between the completion of the final Vanguard Class and construction beginning on the first Astute Class, minimising the risk of delays to the AUKUS program as a result of having to rebuild the workforce. In terms of the Royal Navy’s attack submarine fleet, Freer and Salisbury advocate for the acquisition of 12 SSN-AUKUS (up from the planned like-for-like replacement of the seven Astute Class boats) and “ensure their design has significant land attack and anti-ship missile capability, including vertical launching systems (VLS)” along with expanding the capacity of automation to minimise the crew requirements in face of mounting workforce shortages.

Shifting to the Royal Navy’s embattled Queen Elizabeth Class aircraft carriers, the Royal Navy’s apex capital ships, Freer and Salisbury call for no change to the ships themselves, rather calling for an expansion of the planned F-35B fleet, to grow from the current 72 aircraft to 90 (at least, but ideally 138) allowing both HMS *Queen Elizabeth* and HMS *Prince of Wales* to deploy with three full squadrons of 12 aircraft, while also allowing for a training squadron and spares.



In addition to this, the pair call for the acceleration of the integration of autonomous systems to augment the F-35B fleet, with a hierarchy of priorities, including replacing the “Merlin-carried Crowsnest Airborne Early Warning (AEW) with a drone which can carry a larger radar for longer and at a higher altitude to extend AEW coverage” alongside “introduce a fleet of long-range, long-endurance ISR drones; and explore the possibility of a drone with in-flight refuelling capability”.

Finally, the pair call for significant upgrades for the self-defence capabilities of the carriers, to include the installation of at least two SeaRAM systems per ship to supplement the existing three Phalanx close-in-weapons systems, allowing the carrier to become an active participant in its own defence, with Freer and Salisbury explaining the role SeaRAM would play with “relatively cheap missiles [being] perfect for dealing with any threats which penetrate the CSG’s outer defences. This would amplify the number of short-range missiles available to a CSG to deal with leakers”.

Shifting to the backbone of the Royal Navy’s surface fleet, the destroyers and frigates, the pair begin by stating the obvious, that the Royal Navy’s major surface combatant fleet is unfit for purpose, being both too few, too old, and under-gunned for the contemporary threat environments they may be deployed into.

In order to address this reality, Freer and Salisbury advocate for a review into the Type 45 Class destroyer’s upgrade program to ascertain whether it is possible for any of the warships to receive Mk41 VLS in place of the Sea Ceptor cells. Additionally, they call for the acceleration of the Type 83 Class replacement destroyer program, alongside the proposed replacement to have at least 100 VLS cells, alongside larger VLS modules to accommodate future hypersonic missile systems.

As it relates to the Type 83, Freer and Salisbury advocate for an expansion on the existing Type 45 destroyer fleet from six to eight, returning the escort fleet to a total fleet of 32 hulls. Shifting to the Royal Navy’s frigates, the UK is following a similar model to that of Australia with a fleet of eight proposed “Tier 1” Type 26 frigates (the base design for our own Hunter Class frigates), supported in the “Tier 2” role by a fleet of five Type 31/32 Class frigates, which the pair explain provides a balance of hulls versus missile cells, “These warships would provide the Royal Navy with a cost-effective balance between hull numbers, lethality, and survivability.”

To expand the surface fleet capability, Freer and Salisbury call for a number of changes to the proposed Royal Navy frigate fleet, saying, “Procure an additional two Type 26 Class frigates, taking the total order to 10 vessels ... Integrate the Anti-Submarine Rocket (ASROC) system with the Type 26 Class.”

Shifting to the Type 31/32 frigates, the pair advocate for the acquisition of “an additional four Type 32 frigates, taking the total order to nine vessels” while ensuring that the “Type 32 Class frigate design – as a ‘Type 31 Batch 2’ – does not see a reduction in the capabilities of the Type 31 design.”

Bringing us to the Royal Navy’s foray into large optionally-crewed surface vessels (LOSVs) or as Freer and Salisbury refer to them, arsenal ships, with Freer and Salisbury urging the United Kingdom to follow the example set by Australia, and accelerate “the UK’s exploration of the arsenal ship concept by procuring a single LOSV as soon as feasible, this could be based on the proven River Class OPV hull (stripped of everything apart from minimal crew quarters and packed with VLS), to act as a testbed platform.”

This also has implications for the Royal Navy’s mine countermeasures capability, with Freer and Salisbury proposing that the Royal Navy follow the Australian example of shifting away from traditionally, crewed platforms towards a force dominated by suite of autonomous and uncrewed surface and underwater systems to counter the threats of advanced sea mines.

Freer and Salisbury detailed their push, saying, “Continue with investment in the Mine Hunting Capability program to shift mine countermeasures capabilities towards autonomous uncrewed vessels. This would multiply the number of platforms which could conduct mine countermeasures activities to any vessel capable of hosting the equipment.”

Where their suggestion diverges from the Australian example is the partnering with the fleet’s existing and replacement offshore patrol vessel capacity, with Freer and Salisbury calling on the Royal Navy to “ensure the supplemental offshore patrol capability of the Hunt Class minehunters is not lost when those ships are retired”. Finally, of particular importance for Australia as well, is the proposed shift in the Royal Navy’s sealift and amphibious warfare capabilities and the fleet auxiliary and replenishment-at-sea support capabilities, both critical components of strategies of sea control and sea denial.

In particular, the Royal Navy’s shifting emphasis from more traditional concepts of amphibious warfare towards a doctrine of littoral strike in support of the Royal Marines Commando forces is designed to enhance the overall lethality of the Royal Navy and the capacity of the Royal Marines to support both doctrines of sea control and sea denial.



AUSTRALIAN WAR MEMORIAL

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To this end, Freer and Salisbury advocate for the Royal Navy to “prioritise the Multi-Role Support Ship process to ensure that the program delivers a strong design that fully encapsulates all of the capabilities of the Albion and Bay classes without significant delay” and to “Explore the option of procuring Mk70 containerised VLS cells to amplify the firepower of the new ships.” Finally, as it relates to the capacity of the Royal Navy fleet to sustain deployed operations, Freer and Salisbury call for the Royal Navy to future-proof the Fleet Auxiliary through an expanded acquisition and acceleration of the Fleet Solid Support ship program to expand the regional and global reach of the Royal Navy and Royal Marines Commando at a time of increased great power competition.

Final thoughts

The Royal Australian Navy will be at the forefront of how the nation engages in the Indo-Pacific and will be the tip of the spear for securing and promoting our national interests, accordingly, getting the force structure and capability mix right is increasingly essential during these competitive and increasingly dangerous times. 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.

While taking shortcuts to end up with 50 per cent of something, as opposed to 100 per cent of nothing, as proposed by the government is an admirable goal; ultimately, it will only prove more costly in the long run as we scramble to rapidly develop high-end warfighting capability, so perhaps a longer-term vision of the nation’s role and responsibilities both to itself and its partners in the region.

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 sleight 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.

Ultimately, all of this comes back to the government’s shift away from a “Balanced Force” towards “Focused Force” as championed in the Defence Strategic Review and the foundational problem that is our lack of clearly defined role and objectives for our own defence capabilities and the nation more broadly. This reality 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 “wunderwaffe” or wonder weapons, like autonomous systems, cyber or tactical weapons like HIMARs and others that are being shoehorned into fulfilling “strategic” roles to provide both “impactful projection” and deterrence against “any potential adversary”. Importantly, no one has said that defending the nation in this era of renewed and increasingly capable great power competition will be cheap or easy and we have to accept that uncomfortable reality.



USS LAKE ERIE CG 70 and HMAS PERTH (III) 157 makes a routine call to Pearl Harbour

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