

THE NAVY

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THE JOURNAL OF THE NAVY LEAGUE OF AUSTRALIA

**BEYOND THE PALE OF VICTORY:
THE LAST QUIET YEAR BEFORE THE NEXT WAR**

WHY SHIPBOARD AIRPLANES?

**AUSTRALIA'S ARMY IS ADAPTING
FOR THE LITTORALS**

**AUSTRALIAN SUBMARINES:
A NON-PROCUREMENT REVIEW**



125 YEARS THE NAVY LEAGUE
OF AUSTRALIA
ANNIVERSARY



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Front cover:

(L-R) HMAS SYDNEY (DDG 42) and Spanish Navy frigate MENDEZ NUNEZ (F 104) conduct officer of the watch manoeuvres during Regional Presence Deployment 25-2. (Image LSIS David Cox)

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THE NAVY LEAGUE OF AUSTRALIA

KEEP WATCH

EDUCATE; ADVOCATE; SUPPORT



THE NAVY LEAGUE, 125 YEARS YOUNG

On 26 November 1900, in Launceston, Tasmania, the North Tasmanian Branch of Britain's Navy League was established—the 53rd in the Empire and the first in Australia. It joined a growing international movement advocating naval strength and control of the seas as the surest guarantee of peace. Ironically, that conviction remains just as relevant today.

As the 20th century dawned, the Royal Navy remained vital to Britain and its Dominions. Navy League branches spread across the Empire—from Auckland in 1896 to Wellington in 1904, and by 1903, to Sydney, Melbourne, Perth, Adelaide and Hobart. While many of these branches became inactive until World War I prompted their revival, their legacy endured. These branches not only advocated for naval power but also inspired youth through organisations like the Navy League Boys Naval Brigade and the Sea Cadets, fostering a love of the sea and maritime service.

In 1950, the Navy League of Australia was formally established as an autonomous body under Commander John Bates RANR (later Sir John Bates). This year marks its 75th anniversary. The Federal Council, composed largely of retired naval officers, supported naval initiatives despite constraints imposed by the Naval Defence Act. The League provided infrastructure and administration for cadet programs and offered advocacy where official support was lacking.

When the Commonwealth Government assumed responsibility for cadets in the early 1970s, the League maintained its commitment to their welfare. During the Whitlam Government, cadet programs faced cancellation. The League opposed this strongly, and following the change in government, the Fraser administration reinstated the cadets.

Today, the League continues its connection with Naval Cadets through the annual Navy League Efficiency Award, presented to the best Cadet Unit nationally, with similar awards in each state. There are now over 3,000 cadets across 75 community-based and eight school units, with participation from both girls and boys.

Beyond cadet programs, the League has long championed key capability issues, including the establishment of a carrier-based fleet air arm and nuclear-powered submarines. These proposals often attracted criticism from arm chair Admirals and Politicians seeking to divert defence funding elsewhere.

The League has made numerous parliamentary submissions, participated in forums, hosted ship visits from the RAN and allied navies, and advocated for capability initiatives through its publication *THE NAVY*. Notable recent efforts include advocacy for the Littoral Support Ship (LSS)—which evolved into the *Canberra-class* LHD—the acquisition of the surplus RFA *Largs Bay* (later HMAS *Choules*), and lobbying for a fourth Air Warfare Destroyer.

With the death of Commander Graham Harris RFD RAN in August, see Obit, and previously of Commander Robert Albert AO RFD RD RANR, Admiral Andrew Robertson AO DSC RAN, and John Jeremy AM, this represents an end of an era. The passing of the baton to a new generation of mariners determined, similarly, to take the Navy League of Australia and *THE NAVY* into the 21st Century, and beyond. The Navy League, thanks to the work, commitments, and philanthropy of previous members, is on a sound footing. In recent years this has been consolidated by the work of the NSW Division, led by Colin Bold, Simon Reay Atkinson, and John Jeremy, working closely with John Harker, and NLA Office holders, including Roger Blytham, Brad Barrett, Matt Rowe, the Editor, Diana Hill, Harvey Greenfield, Lynda Gilbert, Graeme Furlonger, and many more besides. If The NLA has seen further, it has been by standing on the shoulders of those giants that came before us.

Over the past 125 years, membership has expanded from predominantly naval personnel to mostly civilians with a strong interest in maritime defence, reflecting the full spectrum of Australia's maritime community. With our launch into the digital era, a full colour journal (since July this year), and on-line payment, the membership base is increasing by hundreds a year. There is still more to do to get our message out – and I have set the challenge to all the Divisions to double their membership base over the next five years. We also are looking for volunteer office-holders, to take on the mantle and maintain the momentum across succeeding generations.

One of the League's most enduring contributions is its independent (non-Government / Defence funded) quarterly journal, *THE NAVY*, first published in 1921 and in continuous circulation since 1938. It has consistently amplified the voice of the "Silent Service," offering insight, education, and advocacy – including for ADF, and Army and Air Force. Despite the rise of digital media, the magazine remains a cornerstone of informed public discourse, distributed to members, Parliament, media, cadets, and Defence.

The League also honours naval service through its Perpetual Community Award, recognising ships and establishments that serve their communities with distinction. It was first awarded to HMAS PENGUIN in 1981. The most recent being HMAS CAIRNS, acknowledged for her outstanding disaster relief efforts and community engagement.

Over time, the Navy League of Australia has evolved from its British Commonwealth roots to resemble the influential Navy League of the United States (NLUS), which focuses on America's maritime defence while supporting sea cadet programs.

The League's most ambitious project to date was the educational video *The Sea and Australia*, produced in the 1980s at a cost exceeding \$200,000. This two-and-a-half-hour program, comprising six episodes, covered topics such as:

Episode	Title
1.	The Voyage of the First Fleet, Sydney Cove, and Early Settlement
2.	The Nature of the Sea
3.	The Resources of the Sea
4.	Commercial Shipping, Ports and Harbours
5.	Navigation and Safety at Sea
6.	Protection and Conservation (including RAN history)

Distributed free to over 2,500 secondary schools with support from six state education authorities, the video remains a landmark in maritime education.

The RAN has frequently acknowledged the League's role in promoting naval and sea power awareness. For the League's centenary in 2000, then Chief of Navy, VADM David Shackleton, wrote:

"Your services to the Australian Navy and indeed Australia as a nation will always be highly valued, and will be in great demand as uncertainty and insecurity dominate our national landscape in the years to come."

As the Navy League approaches its 125th anniversary in 2025, it also celebrates 75 years as a federated and independent entity. Its mission remains unchanged: to remind Australians of the sea's vital role in national wellbeing and to advocate for a strong, capable Navy in an increasingly uncertain world.

Through press releases, parliamentary submissions, seminars, and spirited correspondence, the League continues to champion Australia's maritime future.

Our Motto is Keep Watch with our mission being to: Educate, Advocate, Support

- **Educate** Australians about our identity as a maritime nation whose prosperity and security depend on safe seas and unrestricted trade
- **Advocate** for defence self-reliance, maritime capabilities, and a strong merchant marine
- **Support** the Navy apolitically through information, recruiting, cadets, and recognition programs

Australia is a vast island nation. The sea is not merely a playground – it is our girth: a strategic frontier, a commercial artery, and a source of national identity. As regional tensions rise, the Navy League's mission must – and will – remain unwavering.

Mark Schweikert

President, Navy League of Australia
president@navyleague.org.au

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING THE NAVY LEAGUE OF AUSTRALIA

BY ORDER OF THE FEDERAL COUNCIL, MARK SCHWEIKERT, PRESIDENT

Notice is hereby given that the Annual General Meeting of the League will be held on Tuesday 25th November at the Canberra Rex Hotel, 150 Northbourne Ave, Braddon, Canberra at 16:30.

BUSINESS

1. To confirm the Minutes of the previous meeting, held on 8th November 2024.
2. To receive the Annual Report of the Federal Council.
3. To receive the financial statements for the year ended 30 June 2025.
4. To elect Office Bearers for the year 2025-26, as follows:
 - a. Federal President
 - b. Two Federal Vice Presidents
5. To appoint Office Bearers, as follows:
 - a. Honorary Federal Secretary
 - b. Honorary Federal Treasurer
6. Nominations for these positions can be lodged with the Honorary Secretary Brad Barrett at bradbarrett68@gmail.com by 15th November 2025.
7. General Business

To deal with any matter notified in writing to the Honorary Secretary by 15th November 2025.



All members of the League are welcome to attend; please register your attendance with the Honorary Secretary at the above address by 15th November 2025.

THE NAVY LEAGUE OF AUSTRALIA,
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Her Excellency the
Honourable Sam Mostyn AC
Governor-General of the
Commonwealth of Australia

THE NATIONAL PATRON OF
THE NAVY LEAGUE OF AUSTRALIA

Message for The Navy League

As Governor-General and Commander-in-Chief, I am proud to support the Navy League of Australia as your Patron.

In my first year in office, and as the daughter of an Australian Army veteran, it has been an honour to share in the events, celebrations, ceremonies and commemorations of the modern Australian Defence Force.

At the Australian War Memorial's VP Day Last Post Ceremony in August, I was privileged to share special conversations, moments and memories with 12 veterans of the Second World War, including Gerald Shepherd and Reginald Thomas Swanborough of the Royal Australian Navy. In June, I joined veterans, friends, and families at the National Commemorative Service in Canberra for the 75th anniversary of the Korean War, where I was deeply honoured to lay a wreath in remembrance of the 367 Australians who lost their lives in that conflict, including three from the Navy.

On Anzac Day, I represented Australia at the Dawn Service in Gallipoli to commemorate the 110th anniversary of the landings, and to honour the sacrifice of all who died, on land and at sea, in that terrible conflict. In November, I visited the National Anzac Centre at Albany. Looking out over King George Sound was a powerful moment to remember the Navy for its role transporting the first convoy of troops travelling to war in 1914. Earlier this year, I visited the HMAS SYDNEY II memorial, in Geraldton, marking the vessel's sinking and the loss of all on board.

During Navy Week in March, I was delighted to join Chief of Navy Vice Admiral Mark Hammond AO RAN for a Ceremonial Sunset to celebrate the Navy's 124th birthday and to reflect on its remarkable history and the vital role it plays in modern Australia. I was pleased to meet the Navy's inspiring future leaders in November at the Graduation Parade of the New Entry Officers' Course 74 at HMAS CRESWELL, and to visit HMAS ALBATROSS to learn about our sailors' work in aviation training, maintenance and operational planning. In December, it was a delight to join family and friends of our servicewomen and men for the ADFA Graduation Parade, and to celebrate the 97 Royal Australian Navy midshipmen graduates as emerging leaders.

A highlight of my first six months in office was to join Their Majesties King Charles and Queen Camilla aboard the *Admiral Hudson* to conduct a review of the Royal Australian Navy Fleet during Their Majesties visit to Australia in October. The review featured His Majesty's Australian ships HOBART, WARRAMUNGA, ARUNTA, GASCOYNE, and YARRA, and a remarkable fly-past. I was proud to accompany Their Majesties to witness this showcase of the Navy as a sophisticated, visible, and modern branch of the ADF.

Also in March, Chief of Navy and I walked alongside veterans and current serving women and men with *Soldier On* as part of the *March On Challenge*. As Patron of *Soldier On*, marching in support of *Soldier On*'s mental health services was an opportunity to acknowledge the cost of service on veterans, their families, and communities.

From the extraordinary capability on display at Fleet Base East, which I visited in September, to the solemn commemoration of service and sacrifice I experienced as I laid a wreath at the memorial to Edward 'Teddy' Sheehan VC in May, I have been privileged to grow in understanding of our layered naval history, and the strength of our modern Navy and its contribution to Australia's security, stability, and prosperity.

I am especially grateful for the service of the Navy aides-de-camp, along with colleagues from the Australian Army and the Royal Australian Air Force, who support me as Governor-General with such extraordinary skill, efficiency, and dedication. Lieutenant Tiffany McCormack ADC RAN, who is currently in the role, has upheld the Navy tradition of service with energy and integrity.

The Navy League of Australia's commitment to preserving the 'maritime wellbeing of the nation,' including to promote the interest of young Australians in the Navy through the Australian Navy Cadets, and through the calibre of the research and commentary published in *THE NAVY* magazine, plays an important role in keeping the Navy's current requirements and future strength on the national agenda.

As your Patron, I am pleased to stand alongside you in your 125th anniversary year, and I look forward to meeting many of the Navy League of Australia's members in the years ahead.



Mark Hammond
Chief of Navy
Vice Admiral AO, RAN



Chief of Navy Forward 125th Birthday of The Navy League of Australia

The Navy is, and always has been, a family-of-sorts. It is a group of people from diverse backgrounds who have all made the same decision to serve their nation, acknowledging that this commitment often comes with personal sacrifices and hardships. It is also an aggregation of like-minded souls who know what it means to serve for months at a time at sea, away from family, friends, and the comforts of home and modern society.

The demanding nature of naval service – whether at sea or ashore – creates a unique environment where teamwork, loyalty, and mutual support are not just values, but necessities. During the most challenging times, the Navy community stands together, offering strength and resilience, much like a close-knit family would. Every Australian who has served in our Navy continues to be considered a member of our wider-Navy family for the rest of their lives, long after their service is done.

Many of our veterans continue to contribute to the intellectual rigour behind the generation of sea power and how we employ it in the business of fighting and winning at sea, and also serve as our staunchest advocates - telling our Navy's story and articulating the vital role it plays in protecting Australia's maritime, economic and national security. It is particularly through these endeavours that the Navy League of Australia has made an outstanding contribution throughout its 125-year history. You should be rightly proud of your contribution to our Navy and our nation. We are certainly grateful for it.

I was deeply saddened to hear of the recent passing of Navy League of Australia Life Member, Mr John Jeremy. John's work in naval architecture and as an advocate of the strategic importance of the Cockatoo Dockyard at Garden Island, has contributed greatly to the Royal Australian Navy's capability and evolution into a modern, lethal, Australian fighting force. His contributions to the Navy League of Australia, the Indo Pacific Sea Power Conference, the Naval Historical Society of Australia, amongst other organisations, was equally as impactful, and we are better for having been blessed with his company and enthusiasm for our Navy and the maritime professions at-large.

Thank you to all the members of the Navy League of Australia, past and present, for your outstanding contributions to our Navy community and for fostering robust maritime-thought and discussion. On behalf of the Royal Australian Navy, congratulations on your 125th Anniversary. Your accomplishments have been numerous and significant, and your efforts illustrate the profound commitment of your members to our Navy family.

I also hope to see many of you at our Navy's 125th anniversary events and activities next year.

Bravo Zulu!



NAVY LEAGUE OF
THE UNITED STATES
CITIZENS IN SUPPORT OF SEA SERVICES

15 August 2025

Mr. Mark Schweikert
Federal President
Navy League of Australia
GPO Box 1719
Sydney NSW 2001 Australia



CAPT Larry Salter, USN (Ret.)

Subject: Congratulations on Your 125th Birthday!

Dear Mark,

The Navy League of the United States is honored to extend our warmest congratulations to the Navy League of Australia as you celebrate this remarkable milestone, 125 years of unwavering dedication to maritime excellence and national security.

For over a century and a quarter, your organization has stood as a beacon of advocacy for Australia's naval strength and maritime prosperity. From your founding in 1900 as branches of the United Kingdom Navy League to your evolution into an independent federation with divisions across all states and territories since 1950, you have consistently championed the vital truth that a strong Navy and robust maritime industry are the cornerstones of Australia's security and independence.

Your tireless efforts to educate the Australian public about the critical importance of maritime defense have never been more relevant. As an island nation facing an evolving strategic landscape, Australia's need for comprehensive naval capability, working in concert with the Army and Air Force, continues to grow. Your advocacy for enhanced maritime defense capabilities and support for local shipping, manufacturing, and transport industries demonstrates the forward-thinking leadership that has defined your organization for 125 years.

The parallels between our organizations run deep. Though we were established just two years apart, we share an enduring commitment to the same noble cause: ensuring our nations maintain the maritime strength necessary to protect our freedoms, secure our trade routes and defend our way of life. Your dedication to these principles has made Australia and the broader Pacific region more secure.

As you embark upon your next 125 years of service, the Navy League of the United States stands with you in solidarity and friendship. May your continued advocacy strengthen Australia's maritime heritage and enhance the security of our allied nations.

Happy 125th Birthday to the Navy League of Australia!

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read "L. Salter".

CAPT Larry Salter, USN (Ret.)
National President
Navy League of the United States

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NLA 125

This bumper issue represents the last publication of 2025 and marks the 125th anniversary of the founding of the Navy League of Australia, in 1900. To acknowledge the occasion papers, reflect the five NLA core themes:

- Paper 1: Air power from sea – by Dr Norman Friedman
- Paper 2: Strategic threats – by Ascanius Alba
- Paper 3: Army Littoral Manoeuvre – by Major General Ash Collingburn, AM, DSM and Colonel Tom McDermott, AM, CSC, DSO
- Paper 4: Submarine procurement – by Robert Cuthbert Blake
- UUV and UAV, as addressed in all four papers.

Dr Friedman concludes, *inter alia*:

World War II and later experience show that a few airplanes near the scene of action buy a lot more than a much larger force far away, trying to respond to events at a distance. What matters, then, is often the time it takes to reach a target rather than the distance an airplane can fly. Sea-based aircraft can operate more freely closer to the action, giving their pilots more time and flexibility.

Any UAV solution, of course, implies a combination of complex software and anti-jam (and anti-interception) commands. It will still pay to launch the UAVs, like tactical aircraft, from a ship not too far from the battle area.

Examining the precarious strategic context – in which Maritime-Air-Littoral Manoeuvre (MALM) will be pivotal – Ascanius Alba considers time is running out (2027 is 14 months away):

It is time to remember that the comforts of peace are temporary, but the consequences of neglect can be permanent. Australia must therefore move forward with clarity and purpose: invest now in our people, our arsenals, our endurance, and national unity. Do it at the speed that the times demand. Plant those trees of security today, so that in the storm to come, Australia may shelter under them and emerge unbowed. The clock is ticking, and there will be no second chance if we get this wrong. The free world must prepare now, or pay dearly later – because history does not give warnings twice, and it never excuses the unready.

Building on Army's Littoral Manoeuvre expansion (in a paper first published by USNI *Proceedings*), Major General Collingburn, and Colonel McDermott consider "national knowledge of the hard-fought battles of the Pacific campaigns (referred to by both Alba and Friedman) is shallow: few annual commemorations recall Operations Postern or Cartwheel, or the actions at Milne Bay or Sanananda":

The Australian Army today is rediscovering its amphibious and littoral-operation DNA. This is no surprise, given Australia is—as our national anthem puts it—a nation "girt by sea" that has always

relied on a maritime strategy... the transformation of the Australian Army is therefore an evolution, not a revolution. The weapons may be changing, but the archipelagic geography remains the same.

The final paper by Blake – a compilation of over fifteen papers published by *THE NAVY* since 2015 – is on submarine procurement. Noting a submarine valley of death of up to up to 15 years (when Australia will be unable to have one submarine on continuous at sea patrol (CASP)), the paper argues "a capability-driven strategy is no strategy at all. The argument (echoing also Alba in paper 2), since at least 2015, remains the same":

1. Develop Australian *Versatile Modular System* (VMS) optionally crewed and boat-hull submarines, (that could act also as UUV e.g. Ghost Shark), based upon shallow-water operations to Australia's north and defending Australian LOC, ports, and harbours;
2. Apply diesel-electric MOTS submarines, e.g. the *Taigei-class* and, recalling wartime Q-ships, heavy lift ships to move the Force up threat rapidly and discretely;
3. Develop nuclear powered submarines, (AUKUS) over the medium long term (as currently being planned); [19]
4. Allow designs for rapid adaptation and modularisation (RAM) to task, up threat.

SUMMONED TO ROME?

In late August, the Minister for Defence (aka DPM) appeared to be summoned to Washington for meetings without coffee and biscuits, or SOW (was SECDEF). The details are sketchy. Just before the trip, the Iranian Ambassador to Australia was expelled and, following attacks on Australian soil, the IRGC declared a terrorist organisation. It is possible that intelligence sharing relating to these arrests was raised. Shortly after the trip, the RAN – for the first time since 2023 – took part in a combined Freedom of Navigation exercise (off Scarborough Shoal) with the USN, RCN, and Philippine Navy. Followed by an (apparently) un-notified transit of the Taiwan Strait, with the RCN. Both occurring over the CCP 80th Victory celebrations – earning a rebuke from China. After the visit and concerns raised regarding AUKUS and ADF funding by the Colby Review, there have been a plethora of Government announcements – but seemingly no new money. Claims being made for additional Defence funding over the longer term, all the while real Defence funding declines (see *Directed Telescope* and *Flash Traffic*) and further cuts loom under the *Integrated Capability Assessment* 25. To cap it all, Chinese intervention apparently stalled the much-heralded PNG and Vanuatu Defence and Security agreements, expected to be signed by the Prime Minister in late September. Smoke and mirrors come to mind. ■



HMAS BRISBANE (DDG 41) and HMCS VILLE DE QUEBEC (FFH 332) undertook Taiwan Strait transit, photo from HMAS BRISBANE (Image LSIS Danyellah Hill).



COMMANDER GRAHAM HARRIS RFD RANR

29 AUGUST 1937 – 4 AUGUST 2025



The Navy League regrets to inform members and readers that its former long serving Federal President, Mr Graham Harris RFD, dearly loved and loving husband to Sandra his devoted wife of 63 years, Father to Andrew, James, and Alastair and grandfather to thirteen grandchildren and two great-grandchildren, passed away after a short battle with cancer.

Born in Melbourne, Graham lived a life defined by service, compassion, and unwavering integrity. A proud alumnus of Scotch College and the University of Melbourne, he was admitted to Law on 1 March 1961, signing the Bar Roll on 6 March 1961 to begin a distinguished legal career, dedicating over three decades to family law. Graham was always a consummate gentleman, including in court. Reportedly, his approach was such that witnesses would often become so relaxed during cross examination as not to see him nicely corralling them before being asked the unanswerable question. The door to his chambers was always open for those seeking advice, which advice was always well considered and on point. His work was marked by a deep commitment to supporting families and mentoring junior barristers.

Graham's sense of civic duty led him to Federal Parliament, where he served as the Member for Chisholm from 1980 to 1983. During his tenure, he contributed to three Government Committees—Defence, Law and Government, and Health and Welfare—chairing the latter in 1982.

His devotion to Commonwealth and Country extended beyond politics and law. Graham joined the Royal Australian Naval Reserve in 1965, rising to the rank of Commander. Using his interrogation skills as a barrister, he served with distinction as Director of Naval Intelligence (Reserves), training intelligence officers and contributing to Australia's strategic defence posture during the Cold War. In some regards, keeping Naval Intelligence alive over these lean years. He was awarded the Reserve Force Decoration (RFD) in 1985 and retired from active service in 1997.

Graham's passion for maritime defence found enduring expression through the Navy League of Australia, which he joined in 1973. He became Victorian Division President in 1992 and Federal President in 1994, a role he held for 23 transformative years. Under his leadership, the League underwent corporate restructuring, revived dormant divisions, and strengthened its advocacy for naval capability and the maritime industry. His regular columns in *THE NAVY* journal reflected his strategic foresight and unwavering belief in a strong, self-reliant Navy and Australian Defence Force.

He was instrumental in preserving Osborne House, the original home of the Royal Australian Naval College, and oversaw the publication of *Keeping Watch: A History of the Navy League of Australia 1895–2015*. Graham's legacy within the League is one of wisdom, resilience, and visionary leadership—a beacon for future generations.

As President, Graham was used to walking the corridors of power and providing sage maritime advice to select committees. His dedication, care, and advice was highly valued – on occasion, diplomatically resolving issues raised in *THE NAVY* with the “less pleased of Navy-in-Canberra.” Including on nuclear-powered submarines. On the sad death of Robert Albert in January 2023 and although retired as President, Graham's support and practical advice was instrumental in allowing the NSW DIV to take forward *THE NAVY* and the NLA (into its 125th year) on a sound footing.

Beyond his professional and civic achievements, Graham was a lifelong sports enthusiast, a proud member of the Melbourne Cricket Club, and a passionate supporter of the Essendon Football Club. Yet, his greatest pride was his family. He is survived by his wife Sandra, and their three sons—Andrew, James, and Alastair—along with their families, all of whom were blessed by his love, warmth, and guidance.

Graham Harris will be deeply missed. His passing, along with Commander Robert Albert AO RFD RD RANR, Admiral Andrew Robertson AO DSC RAN, and John Jeremy AM who sadly predeceased him, represents the end of an era – the last of the *Great Generation*. Their inspiration and leadership have provided the NLA with the foundations with which to build upon for the next 125 years. His spirit, values and legacy of service will continue to inspire all who had the privilege to know him.

Fair winds dear friend – we have the watch.

Mark Schweikert
President

The Navy League of Australia

For the maintenance of the Maritime wellbeing of the nation. The Navy League is intent upon keeping before the Australian people the fact that we are a maritime nation and that a strong Navy and capable maritime industry are elements of our national wellbeing and vital to the freedom of Australia. The League seeks to promote Defence self-reliance by actively supporting defence manufacturing, research, cyberspace, shipping, transport, and other relevant industries.

Through geographical necessity Australia's prosperity, strength, and safety depend to a great extent upon the security of the surrounding seas and island areas, and on unrestricted seaborne trade.

The strategic background to Australia's security is changing and, in many respects, has become much less certain following increasing tensions, particularly in East Asia involving major powers, and in Europe and the Middle East. The League believes that Australia should rapidly increase the capability to defend itself, paying particular attention to maritime defence.

The Navy League:

- Believes Australia can be defended against attack and that the prime requirement of our defence is an evident ability to control the sea and air space around us and to contribute to defending essential lines of sea, undersea and air communication with our Allies and trading partners.
- Supports a continuing strong alliance with Five Eyes, AUKUS, QUAD, FPDA, and ANZUS partners.
- Supports close relationships with all nations in our general area particularly PNG, Indonesia, the Philippines and the South Pacific Island States.
- Advocates the acquisition of the most capable modern armaments, surveillance systems, sensors, and decision support to ensure decisive advantage over forces in our general area.
- Advocates a strong deterrent element in the ADF.
- Believes the ADF must be capable of protecting commercial shipping both within Australian waters and beyond, in conjunction with allies.
- Endorses the development of the capability for the patrol and surveillance of all of Australia's ocean areas, its island territories and the Southern Ocean.
- Supports Government initiatives for rebuilding an Australian commercial fleet capable of supporting the ADF and the carriage of essential cargoes to and from Australia in times of conflict.
- Supports Government intention to increase maritime preparedness and increase defence expenditure to 3% of GDP.
- Urges the strength and capabilities of the Army (including particularly the Army Reserve) and Air Force be enhanced, and the weaponry, intelligence, surveillance, reconnaissance, cyberspace and electronic capabilities of the ADF be increased, including an expansion in its UAS, UAV capability.
- The Navy League believes maritime Defence requires a joint integrated endeavour across Navy, Army and Air Force.
- Considers that the level of both the offensive and defensive capabilities of the RAN should be strengthened, in particular with a further increase in the number of proposed replacement surface combatants noting the need to ensure essential fuel and other supplies, and the many other essential maritime tasks.
- Recommends bringing forward the start date of the destroyer replacement program to both strengthen the RAN and mitigate the local industry capability gap.
- Recommends the urgent replacement and increase in numbers of the current mine-countermeasure force.
- Strongly supports the early acquisition of nuclear-powered submarines.
- Recommends very early action to provide a strategic submarine base on the Eastern seaboard and further development of Western Australia facilities.
- Notes the potential combat effectiveness and flexibility of the STOVL version of the Joint Strike Fighter (F-35B Lightning II) and supports further examination of its application within the ADF through the LHDs.
- Supports the development of Australia's defence industry, including strong research and design organisations capable of the construction and maintenance of all warships, submarines, and support vessels in the Navy's order of battle, and welcomes the Government decision to provide a stable and continuous shipbuilding program.
- Advocates the retention in maintained reserve of operationally capable ships that are required to be paid off for resource or other economic reasons.
- Supports a strong and identifiable Naval Reserve with consideration as to remobilising the Port Divisions in support of securing the maritime and homeland base.
- Promotes and supports the Australian Navy Cadets organisation.
- Advocates urgent Government research and action to remedy the reported serious naval recruiting and retention problem.

As to the RAN, the League, while noting vital national peacetime tasks conducted by Navy, including border protection, flag showing/diplomacy, disaster relief, maritime rescue, hydrography and aid to the civil power:

- Supports the maintenance of a Navy capable of effective action in hostilities and advocates a build-up of the fleet and its afloat support elements to ensure that, in conjunction with the Army and RAAF, this can be sustained against any force which could be deployed in our area of strategic interest.

The League:

- Calls for a bipartisan political approach to national defence with a commitment to a steady long-term build-up in Australia's defence capability including the required industrial infrastructure.
- Believes that, given leadership by successive governments, Australia can defend itself in the longer term, within acceptable financial, economic and manpower parameters

Setting aside the gerrymandered Marles' Defence budget (including pensions, security and infrastructure spending to claim 2.8% GDP) *THE NAVY* analysis of the Defence budget appears surprisingly like that being provided by the Pentagon, Elbridge Colby, and *The Australian* commentators. Perhaps they are reading *Directed Telescope*?

ARE THEY SERIOUS?

To pay for the promises made during the Election, the Government is undertaking what is euphemistically termed its *Integrated Capability Assessment*, 2025 (ICA25). Driven by the Auditor General's Office (AGO), this program is ostensibly about optimisation. It is a further 10% cut, year on year, of the Defence budget – to 2027/28. The consultancies running the Government and AGO (behind the scenes) have constructed the budget to show an overspend of the program, by as much as 33%. Less is always more in consultancy-world.

Do the math.

NLA Defence analysts have long noted that AUKUS and maintaining current in-Service, conventional capabilities of Army, Air Force, and Navy comes at 3% GDP (2% conventional Defence, plus 1% AUKUS). Something the Government have declared will be delivered in 2032.

The math is simple. Remove 33% of current program spending and you can deliver AUKUS at 2.34% GDP.

No Deterrence.

As *Ascanius Alba* maintains in paper 2, Deterrence is about capability, will, and intent. It is also about having the industrial, societal, and research base necessary to build and maintain those capabilities, in peace and war. In terms of intent and will, it requires managing the Deterrence escalator up and down. Which means having in place conventional forces and capabilities necessary to deter escalation; graduate the use of submarines (at the tip of the spear), and enable "second strike." Able to respond to a "first strike." Post AUKUS, the ADF will have few of the capabilities left necessary to manage the Deterrence escalator. It is also increasingly unclear if the Government has the will to exercise Deterrence-in-peace (when required), even if it had the intent.

The incredible and the miraculous

The additional 10% a year (min) cuts to Defence, means that Defence spending will flat-line for the rest of this Parliament (to 2028) at or about 2.05%. It will then – if the forward estimates and commitments are maintained – grow at 8% per annum, to reach 3% GDP in 2032. First, this type of increase in spending in peace time is unprecedented (and most unlikely given this Government's record); secondly it is unlikely that Defence will be able to cope, after six years of cuts, shrinkage, and removing all its surge capacity – through "optimisation and efficiency" regimes. Where the less is always people.

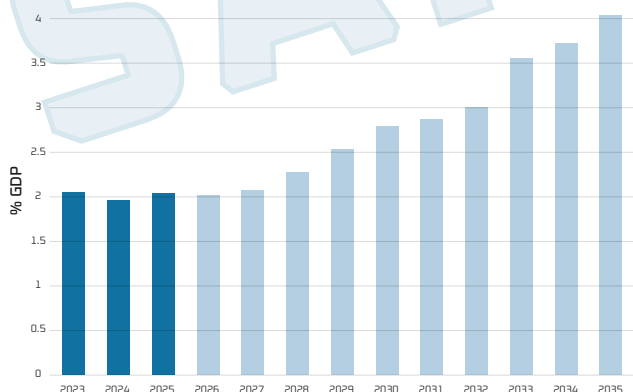


Fig 1: The Incredible and Miraculous ADF Budget, 2023-2034.



A Collins-class submarine – ICA 25 cut to LOTE? (Image LSIS IGGY Roberts)

The DPM and Minister for Defence, Mr Richard Marles, announced in late 2024, that the Defence Budget (then at 2.04% GDP) would grow to \$100B ((3.75% GDP) by 2034/5. This even more incredible piece of accounting, would mean growing the Defence budget by 9% per annum from 2027. If the increase to 3% GDP by 2032 based upon ICA25, is a piece of accounting wizardry – the delivery of Richard Marles' budget at 3.75% GDP in 2034 will be a miracle. But hey, only those poor sailors, soldiers, and aviators still serving will be left to pick up what pieces may remain. The polities will be long gone.

THE WELFARE INDUSTRY COMPLEX

Chris Donnelly (UK Earendel Strategic Analyst) noted that "fifty years ago in the UK, approximately 1/3 of Government spending went on Health, Education, and Welfare, today that figure is more like 75%". [1] Examination of Australia's current public sector budget, including Defence, for 2025/6 indicates up to 83% of the budget is spent on Health, Welfare, Education (and the NDIS). Growing to 4.7% of Government spending, the NDIS will overtake Defence (at 4.25%) in 2025/6.

Historically, the Government accounted for about 37% of GDP: \$1.70 for every \$1.0 spent on the public sector. In recent years, debt re-payments and off-balance sheet debt has been accrued through Infrastructure projects (Renewables, e.g. Snowy 2.0) through Public Finance Initiatives (PFI) and Public Private Partnerships (PPP), undertaken by all Governments. Current Government expenditure may amount to almost 45% of GDP: \$1.22 for every dollar contributed by the public sector. Reportedly, 50% of Australian jobs are now in the Public Sector.

Traditionally, Communist governments (read PLA or Red Army) had control and influence over 50-60% or more of national GDP (\$0.66 to \$1.0 for every dollar contributed by the non-public sector). Australia may not be far short – noting, since COVID, growth has been driven entirely by the Public Sector.

The current Treasurer is beginning to respond to the implicit economic threats (headwinds) behind these figures. He can restore to a more balanced budget by one of four (or 5) strategies:

1. Raise taxes (e.g. GST);
2. Borrow more (transferring debt to future generations). Sovereign debt becomes more costly to fund as economic performance declines, debts grow, and currencies weaken. Consider Victoria's economy;
3. Substantially improve productivity – by 5% pa across the Public Sector, for at least the next five years (which, as the UK is finding, may not be delivered by taxing more);
4. Cut the Public Sector by 17% over four years and rebalance with the private sector.
5. Some combination of all four, settling for a relatively higher proportion of public spending by GDP.



LCVP1 landing ashore from CTG 628.1 Talisman Sabre 25 – Army LitM Delayed by ICA 25? (Image LSIS Connor Morrison)

What the markets are unlikely to bear for long is no action to reduce debt and improve productivity. To an extent, the Government's hands are tied by State expenditure – e.g., combined, the State's spend 7.7% of GDP on their Public Service, compared to the APS at 1.1% GDP (over half the Defence budget). Parliament and Government, across multiple levels in Australia is also expensive, at 1.7% GDP. Notwithstanding, Defence in 2025/6 will be at or around 2.05% GDP, compared to the NDIS, at 2.1% and growing.

BETWEEN WARFARE AND WELFARE – A ROCK AND A HARD PLACE

Defence freezing and budget cuts funding welfare and preferred electorates?

Devised for all the right reasons, NDIS was intended to assist those people not otherwise supported by the Welfare safety net. It sought to restore work-life balance to disabled people and allow them and their carers to continue being productive members of society. It was not intended to create a new welfare category, or “grow” the disabled population. Nor create a welfare industry, based on the provision of care to a “newly disabled” category. Yet this is what it appears to have done.

In 2018, in the UK and Australia, about 7.9% of the population were considered to have a *Profound Disability*. In the same year, 16.8% of the UK population were considered disabled (including the profoundly disabled) – 17.7% in Australia. Differences potentially accounted for by definitions applied. In 2017/18, one in about 6 of the population were “classified” as having a disability, one in about 12-13 profoundly so.

The percentage of profoundly disabled (7.9%) has remained the same in the UK and Australia. In 2025, 24% of the UK population were considered disabled (including the profoundly disabled), and 25.1% in Australia. One in about 4 of the population are now “classified” as having a disability, and the same one in about 12-13, profoundly so.

How can this be?

Quoting Sartre in Szasz:

Sartre's point of departure is the premise that the average man wants to feel that he is good and virtuous. “The evil doer is the Other... It is therefore during War that a good man has the clearest conscious... Unfortunately, one cannot always be fighting. From time to time there must be peace. For peacetime [thinking], society has, in its wisdom, created what might be called professional evil doers” [2, 3] – *those seeking to do good; rather than first doing no harm.*

Has Australia got ill and a less safe (riskier, despite WH&S) place to “be” in the eight years since 2017/18, or is something else going on? This may explain, in part, the selection of RF Kennedy as President Trump's Health Secretary, with his emphasis on “making America healthy again” – tackling the “chronic disease epidemic (the leading cause of death in the U.S., which also drives health care costs) and addressing the power of big food and big pharma (the US welfare industry), to maximise profits (e.g. prescribed opiates) at the expense of the country's health”.

Manufacturing disability?

In his treaty “The Manufacture of Madness,” Szasz (1970) examined the *Inquisition(s)* (1184-1350; 1478-1834), alongside the then Mental Health Movement, including in the Soviet Union. [2] He noted Sartre asking “where will the *Just Man* find evil?” [3] – before answering: “the same place as the *Normal Man* finds mental illness.” Szasz's argument, was that “madmen” are manufactured by mental diagnosis, based on political belief, race, religion, economic status, industry [big pharma complexes], and political / government ideologies. Noting definitions of disabled includes both mental and physical health, Szasz asked at the time:

For who's good? The answer can only be for those (the state and federal governments, their sub-divisions [factions and preferred electorates?] and philanthropic organisations [NGOs, Trusts, activists, etc.] who hire them (the army [industry] of doctors, psychiatrists, psychologists, para-medics, nurses, carers, and social workers), who define their tasks, and who of course pay them. [2]

In the UK and Australia, in the eight years since 2017 disabled diagnoses (beyond the profoundly disabled) have expanded by between 170% and 180%. The “sector” as-a-whole has expanded by 140%. In terms of growth, Disabled Health “demand” in both countries has been growing at a rate of between 5-6% a year – and that of the disabled (as opposed to profoundly disabled), at between 8% (AU) and 10% (UK) a year. A new class of disabled has been manufactured, with a *Welfare Industry Complex* (WIC) to support it.

So What?

Why is this important to Navy and Defence? Because by decree, and to the preference of many *Inner-City Elites* (ICE) who vote largely for the Green-Teal-Left – applying, for example, diagnoses of *Attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder* (ADHD)) now inflicting 4% of the population, including many young boys – a significant proportion of the population (up to 7%, one in 14 of the previously “able”), have been classified disabled.



National Advanced Surface to Air Missile System Woomera 2024 – cut by ICA 25?
(Image PTE Nicholas Marquis)

The impact is threefold: a largely non-productive WIC has been grown (reducing productivity, which original Health Services were designed to support); increasing the Welfare budget; and (as is now clear), exacerbating opportunities for fraud and graft. To the detriment of other Government expenditure and the productive economy. For example, on Defence, health, and education.

There appears a play-off between the NDIS budget (increasing at up to 20% pa to match “disability” demand) and the Defence budget – frozen and cut since 2022. In fact, reducing at 3.17% a year – 10% between 2022 and 2025.

The Government has a question to answer: “if it is serious about welfare and national security (warfare), it will need to address the WIC.” Or raise taxes / borrow more; or significantly improve productivity (including in the burgeoning *Welfare Industry Complex*); and, or, make cuts.

A 1.1% trimming of Australia’s Health, Education and Welfare Budget, would realise a 58% increase in the Defence budget, to 3% GDP. These are the type of decisions, a bold and principled Government would be taking – supported by a loyal, competent opposition. Given Australia has neither, ongoing factional / union interests and preferential electorates are a more likely indicator of Defence spending. Paul Keating’s Defence and Foreign Policy will have won by *de facto* – as the economy and Australia loses.

Defence needs to look at the population it will be fighting with – not the imaginary one, or the population it fought with in the 20th Century. Noting “there are no wheelchairs in cyberspace,” (attr. UK VICTOR – Veteran’s ICT Occupational Recovery, proposed program), Defence requires to examine how it can effectively employ reserves and mobilise the force, across all ages and “disabilities.”

ENERGY & DATA SECURITY

Western economies are re-discovering that the greatest improvement to productivity (and debt) will be had by reducing energy costs. This will mean restoring the balance between Coal, Oil, Gas, and Nuclear, with renewables. The current dash for Net Zero – without Nuclear – is adding to debt, increasing inflation, and reducing productivity, by up to 2.5% per annum. While similarly contributing to inflation and reduced productivity, through green tape and green laundering. By tempering the net zero process, withdrawing subsidies, letting the energy markets decide, emphasising Australia’s comparative advantage [4] (retaining Coal, Oil, and Gas at 75% (and introducing Nuclear over the longer term)), the Government could meet fifty percent of its Productivity target. Removal of green tape,

subsidies (and consequent laundering) would also go a long way to achieving public sector cuts. This would also play into the hands and support of industry and traditional blue-collar workers. Noting the ALP may now be an ICE party?

As for the internet, quantum computing, and AI, smelting requires reliable energy production within narrow frequency and voltage ranges. None of this can be provided by Renewables (alone). Even if they were reliable, the lack of rotary (turbine) inertia behind the generation does not provide for stable frequency and voltage. The result of unstable voltage and frequencies is that machines break down more regularly – and their design lives are reduced. For white goods, by as much as 20%. That is not good for productivity. Let alone carbon footprints.

Energy Security requires Australia maintaining its *Strategic Fuel Reserve* (SFR) – at a 90 days capacity. Currently, across all fuel types, Australia has about 68 days, divided between the *Minimum Stockholding Obligation* (MSO), approx. 27 days – and the US Strategic Petroleum Reserve (SPR) and products in shipping (about 41 days). In broad terms, Australia has a *Strategic Fuel Reserve Capability* of 30% its 90-day requirement. It holds a Fuel Sovereign Risk of 70% the SFR. Of which, two-thirds may be considered as a *Sovereign Mitigated Risk* (SMR) – all of which require importing across the Pacific (mostly from the US). Australia has no contingency reserves to make up the remaining 25% of its internationally mandated SFR.

In the worst of events – such as for example from December 1941 to July 1942 (241 days) – Australia could be cut off from the US (and Singapore). In such a situation, even allowing for the ramping up of Australian refining, Australia may have only 45 days of supplies. To fuel, not just Defence and a country at war, but the entire economy – and Allied Navies and Forces deployed to Australia. Or 20% the Fuel Capability and Capacity to fight a war, when cut-off longer than two (let alone 8) months. It begs the question, “what happens to Australia on Day 46?” Something that our enemies and Allies are no doubt pondering.

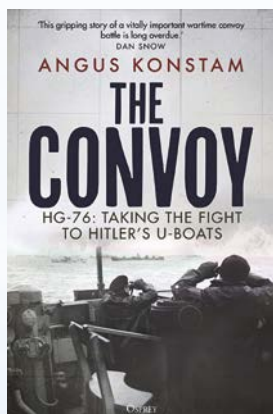
As the recent (July 2025) Qantas Cyber breach has shown, bigdata and energy are deeply intertwined, as is national security (and sovereignty). The cloud at some stage comes to land – rain falls. In the case of data, to be held in offshore data-centres. Some held in countries such as Vietnam, Thailand, China, and Myanmar. This is also a Sovereignty issue.

A modern country (cut off for hours, if not minutes from the www) will not be able to fight without the bigdata and telemetrics necessary to dynamically reconfigure, support and adapt its national capabilities. Bigdata servers, bandwidth, energy (battery), and telemetry requirements already constitute a significant additional logistics impost to front-line (and rear) forces.

From a national security (and sovereignty) perspective, it may be necessary to consider a *Strategic Bigdata Reserve* (SBDR), bunkered in zettabytes, bandwidth, and energy holdings, as per the SFR. If readers think this is not already an issue – they may wish to ask themselves “why all ADF personnel data records are apparently held in Germany?” Not an Allied nation (Five Eyes, QUAD, AUKUS, ANZUS, or FPDA) – or one likely to be sailing over the horizon any time soon. ■

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THE CONVOY

HG-76: Taking the Fight to Hitler's U-boats

By Angus Konstam

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The British prime minister, Winston Churchill, said after World War II that there was only one thing that really frightened him during the conflict; the U-Boat threat. If the Germans could stop the flow of food, munitions, equipment and troops to Great Britain then the war would ultimately be lost. Thus the Battle of the Atlantic was crucial to defeating Nazi Germany. This book by Angus Konstam describes a small but vital part of that six year campaign.

At first look the narrative would appear to be a little odd as its focus is on a single Allied convoy (from Gibraltar to England) in a campaign that saw thousands of convoys traversing the world's oceans; however this convoy was to prove that the U-Boats could be beaten by new tactics and new weapons systems. Much of the new tactics came from Commander Frederic 'Jonnie' Walker who was a pre-war anti-Submarine warfare officer who had languished in the middle ranks for many years due to his criticism of Royal Navy anti-submarine training and equipment – but as the old saying goes 'cometh the moment – cometh the man'. Walker commanded the escort ships for convoy HG-76 and he used new and innovative tactics to combat the Nazi wolf-pack system that had previously wreaked havoc on Allied convoys.

Additionally the convoy also had with it, for the first time, the 'mini' aircraft carrier HMS AUDACITY that had started its life as a German merchant vessel. Following its capture in 1939 the vessel was converted to an aircraft carrier to operate four *Martlet* fighter aircraft (originally bought from the US by the French Government but delivered to the British after the fall of France in mid-1940). The aircraft were ranged on the flight deck (as there was no hangar) and conducted patrols searching for U-boats on the surface and Luftwaffe *Condor* reconnaissance aircraft. The *Condors* were based in Southern France and could operate for up to 12 hours over very long distances and radioed convoy movements to the U-Boats. The frequent air patrols by the *Martlet* fighters, to locate the U-Boats and patrolling *Condors*, disrupted the attacks by stifling the flow of information to the U-boats and also forcing the U-Boats to submerge and thus lose contact with the convoy. AUDACITY's success also made her a prime target and she was eventually sunk by a U-boat in one of the last attacks on convoy HG-76. Of note is that among the Fleet Air Arm pilots serving in AUDACITY was sub-lieutenant Eric 'Winkle' Brown who later became one of the world's best-known test pilots.

The combination of air support from AUDACITY, outstanding leadership and tactical prowess by Walker and sage control of the convoy by the convoy commodore (retired vice admiral Raymond Fitzmaurice) ensured the convoy reached England with only two merchant ships sunk out of 32 ships in the convoy. HMS AUDACITY and one of the escorts were lost but a total of five U-Boats were sunk and another badly damaged and forced to return to port (one of the U-Boats was sunk by the Royal Australian Navy destroyer HMAS NESTOR that had been built in Britain and on her first convoy escort duty).

The logistics issues also rate a mention as several of the convoy escorts had insufficient fuel, to screen the convoy for the full duration of the journey, and had to return to port. Additionally several of the escorts expended all their depth charges due to the constant U-Boat attacks and Walkers aggressive tactics.

The author also describes, in depth, the command and control of the U-Boats exercised by vice admiral Karl Donitz from his headquarters in the Villa Kerillon on the outskirts of Lorient. Donitz and his staff were stretched as they organised and controlled operation in the eastern Atlantic, west coast of Africa, the Mediterranean (after Hitler decided to send submarines to support his ailing Italian) and the western Atlantic after the US enter the war following the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor. Equally of concern for Donitz was the morale and welfare of his submariners; many of who were tired and well overdue for relief with many U-boats lost due to inexperienced crews or over-worked veterans. The over-worked Allied convoy escorts also had the fair share of issues as well and Commander, later Captain Walker, died before the war ended due to exhaustion and ill-health.

Apart from some minor proof-reading issues this is an excellent book and highly recommended for those interested in the Battle of the Atlantic. For those who wish to further immerse themselves in this topic I would also recommend watching the movies *The Cruel Sea* for the British point of view, and *Das Boot* for the German experience.

By Commander Greg Swinden RAN

Long term NLA Member and contributor to THE NAVY.

KEEPING WATCH

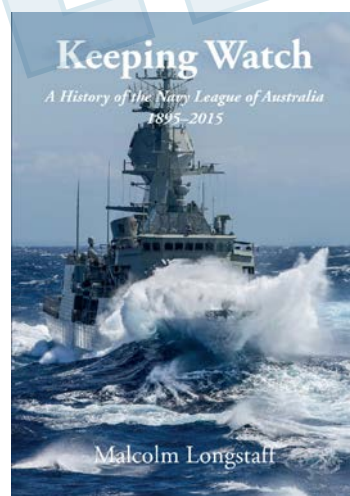
A History of the Navy League of Australia 1895-2015

By Malcolm Longstaff OAM, Navy League of Australia (2016)

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HATCH



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Type 31 HMS VENTURER (F12) on launch and being towed to BAE Systems' Rosyth for weapon and sensor fitting. The class is being considered by The Royal Danish Navy and the Royal Swedish Navy and, as the *Arrowhead 140* design, has been commissioned by the Indonesia, and Polish navies for their new frigates.

Image Babcock

MATCH



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NUSHIP EYRE (P204) began sea trials Feb 2025.

Image Luersen Australia

DESPATCH



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RFA ARGUS (A135) alongside Portsmouth Harbour condemned "unfit to sail" Aug 2025. The RN currently has no amphibious capability at sea.

Image RN