

**Chief of Navy Address to
Western Australian Indo-Pacific Defence Conference 2018
Crown Ballroom 1&2, Crown Towers, Burswood, WA
1440-1455, 30 October 2018**

Topic: Our Navy in Western Australia: Past, Present and Future
(1500 words, 11mins 30secs – 130wpm)

[Handling note: PowerPoint presentation will accompany this address; photos only. Slides included within this speech pack.]

[Slide 1: Introduction]



Good afternoon Ladies and Gentlemen

First of all I would like to thank Kayla for that really inspirational presentation.

As I look at my Navy and the young people that we've got doing extraordinary things every day in uniform, it's great to see that we've got young people in uniform in our schools who aspire to do great things in support of our defence industry.

Gordon introduced the fact that I've been the Chief now for a couple of months. The real honour for me today is that this is the second time that I've visited Western Australia since I've been the Chief, and on each occasion, I've been here to celebrate the relationship between our Navy, and Western Australia.

Peter Lürssen used the term that the RAN is on speaking terms with other Navies. I can assure you, Peter, I am doing my best to keep it that way. Because the alternative might be good for defence industry, but it is not so good for my men and women.

But my point there, is that relationships matter. And the relationship between our Navy and Western Australia is a very important one, and one that I'm particularly proud of.

As we recently celebrated the 40th anniversary of HMAS Stirling, here in Western Australia.

So, this afternoon, I thought I'd take the time to really reflect upon what has been the history of our Navy in Western Australia, where we are currently, and where we are going into the future, in terms of Navy's presence here in Western Australia. We've all had an opportunity this afternoon to have a glimpse at what that is going to look like

The maritime history of Western Australia is an extensive one.

When Dirk Hartog first found and set foot in Western Australia in 1616, he left behind the earliest confirmed archaeological evidence of European settlement in Australia.

In 1827, Royal Navy Officer, Captain James Stirling, made the first European exploration of the island now known as Garden Island, and he later returned in 1829 to establish the first European settlement in Western Australia and the first free English colony in Australia.

Garden Island is one of the foundation stones in the history of Western Australia, and will continue to be integral to our Navy's future. Plans for a navy base on Australia's western seaboard stretch back as far as 1911 with the commencement of construction of the Henderson naval base at Woodman's Point. Construction was interrupted by the First World War, and was eventually abandoned due to the world economic conditions in 1921.

On the 1st of November 1914, Australian and New Zealand troops departed in convoy from King Sound, Albany, initially bound for Europe. There were 38 Australian and 10 New Zealand troop carriers in that first wave and, interestingly, they were escorted by the Japanese battlecruiser, Ibuki, which joined the convoy two days after it had sailed. Ibuki actually guarded the convoy when HMAS Sydney famously caught and defeated Emden in the battle of the Cocos Islands. When the convoys actually reached Alexandria in Egypt on the 3rd of December, however, for many of the troops who disembarked there, their port call in Albany would have been the last time that they had set foot, or even seen Australia.

[Slide 2: Careening Bay]



The need for a naval base in the west was again recognised during World War II and a number of Australian ships, such as HMAS *Sydney* (II), Fairmile motor yachts and auxiliaries, were based in Western Australia at various times. As we have heard earlier today, Fremantle was also home to a United States Navy submarine base, and Garden Island in Cockburn Sound was used as a training facility for the Allied Boats Section of the Services Reconnaissance Department, better known as Z-Force. These were all temporary, wartime arrangements.

A permanent training establishment, called HMAS *Cerberus* (V) and later re-named HMAS *Leeuwin*, was established in Fremantle in 1940. *Leeuwin* became home to the Junior Recruit Training Establishment, and from 1960 to 1984, graduated over 12,000 young recruits, aged between 15 ³/₄ and 16 ¹/₂ years of age.

[Slide 3: Garden Island and Causeway]



In 1966 the Federal Government proposed a naval support facility on Garden Island. Construction of the 4.2 kilometre causeway was completed in June 1973, and at the time, it was the largest building project in Australia.

HMAS *Stirling*, named after Captain James Stirling, was officially commissioned in July 1978, though ships began visiting the facility as early as August 1975. Up to half of our Navy's surface and submarine fleet was to be based permanently in Western Australia. The main fleet base has become known as Fleet Base West.

Since its commissioning on 28 July 1978 *Stirling* has expanded enormously within its existing boundaries and has seen building such as the Submarine Escape Training Facility - one of only six in the world and the only one in the southern hemisphere.

In the 1980s, our submarine fleet moved its basing from HMAS *Platypus*, in Sydney Harbour, to HMAS *Stirling*.

[Slide 4: HMAS Stirling: past and present]



Some 12 Fleet units including Anzac Class frigates and Collins Class submarines are stationed here, along with some 70 units including the Submarine Training and Systems Centre, Australian Clearance Diving Team Number Four and the Defence Communications Station Perth.

HMAS *Stirling*'s primary purpose is to provide operational and logistics support to our Navy ships, submarines and aircraft based in Western Australia.

Stirling remains the largest single employment site in Western Australia, with approximately 3000 uniformed personnel, mostly Navy but also Army and Air Force, and another 500 public service and contractors working there daily.

The future is going to be very bright for our Navy and Western Australia, and very important to our National Endeavour.

[Slide 5: Offshore Patrol Vessels]



As stated by Minister Pyne earlier today, ten of our new Offshore Patrol Vessels will be built by CIVMEC, here at Henderson, commencing in 2020. This project is a significant contributor to the national shipbuilding enterprise. It demonstrates an even deeper and ongoing commitment of our Defence relationship with Western Australia.

Having recently celebrated its 40th Anniversary, HMAS *Stirling* is set for even larger and greater opportunities for engagement with defence industry and the people of Western Australia.

[Slide 6: Hunter Class Frigates]



Also stated by the Minister for Defence, the basis of the next generation of *Stirling's* development is to continue to support existing platforms, such as Anzac frigates and submarines.

Importantly, *Stirling* will enhance that support, and extend it to the new platforms—Offshore Patrol Vessels, Replenishment ships, Hunter class frigates, and of course, the Future submarines. The wider context is not just an extension of wharves or increasing scale of what is being done now. But is rather to build upon the base which incorporates technology and best practice across industry and academic institutions.. Transforming how the fleet is supported and enabling capability, is a key focus for us all.

This transformation will also have a very positive impact on Western Australia.

One of my keys focuses will be for *Stirling* to provide a range of surface ship and training facilities for our submarines. Changes to technology through the use of virtual reality, simulation and remote learning, will further increase the importance of HMAS Stirling and other bases to enable capabilities and integration of important systems, not just US systems, but also French, British, Spanish and German designed systems.

[Slide 7: HMAS Stirling possible redevelopment]



Those who originally designed *Stirling* went far beyond the initial vision. They realised the importance of *Stirling*, and its prime location within Western Australia, as an Indian Ocean Hub. The importance of *Stirling* as the West Coast base for a two coast Navy, was realised and expanded upon. The importance of *Stirling* as a link to security in the Indian Ocean has been spoken about this afternoon. The importance of Western Australia to our Navy and our Nation.

This relationship will continue to grow. Our Navy's footprint here in Western Australia will continue to grow.

And the Australian Government's infrastructure commitments to Western Australia are significant.

These diagrams before you of HMAS *Stirling*, show the art of the possible; redevelopment of the landside features, particularly related to domestic support such as messes, medical, fitness, and accommodation facilities, and improved training facilities. These particular images are an artist's impression of the possible options to expand and develop *Stirling*.

In his keynote speech earlier today, Minister Pyne detailed the extensive investment that the Australian Government is making in Western Australia.

The development of HMAS *Stirling* is just one example of such investment. It reflects Western Australia's importance to the defence and naval shipbuilding industries. It means more ships can be built and sustained here.

The *Stirling* redevelopment will support the future fleet. A fleet that will support growth, security and stability within Western Australia. It will enable our Navy to continue to Fight and Win at sea, and provide security to Our Navy and Our Nation. Ultimately, contributing to the current and future security of Australia, and the prosperity of the region.

I look forward to continuing a strong and prosperous relationship with our Navy and the people and industry of Western Australia.

Thank you very much.

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