

CN Speech at Istanbul Navy Museum –

Closing Conference Project Silent Anzac

It is a great privilege for me to be here tonight to address this gathering of eminent scholars, divers, maritime archaeologists, heritage specialists, submariners and senior officials. Modern Australia and Turkey are young countries but as this magnificent museum demonstrates Turkey's maritime heritage dates back to antiquity. The waters in which AE2 and Sultanhisar met were fiercely contested for millennia before their brief encounter a century ago.

AE2's crew were fortunate indeed to surrender to fellow sailors who were men of honour who rescued them from the sea as their submarine plunged to the floor of the Sea of Marmara. On behalf of the RAN I wish to thank the Turkish Navy for this compassion extended to our sailors a century ago.

I wish to acknowledge and thank all those who have worked so effectively and for so many years to bring Project Silent Anzac to this successful conclusion but if I named every individual who has been engaged in this project I would have time to speak of nothing else.

So rather than attempt this task I will instead share some thoughts about the impact of Project Silent Anzac on the relationship between our nations and navies and the goodwill and warmth that has flowed from this significant joint exploration effort.

In Australia it is widely recognised that the discovery, exploration, protection and conservation of AE2 is a model of how marine archaeology should be done in the 21st century.

I remember the excitement of first learning of Mr Selçuk Kolay's discovery of AE2 in June 1998. His three years of archive studies, interviews with descendants, acoustic and magnetic scanning and deep diving paid off when Lieutenant Commander Stoker's submarine was seen again by Selçuk for the first time in 83 years. We are all in his debt. The following year Tim Smith and Mark Spenser worked with Selçuk to

confirm his discovery. This is what Tim later wrote describing the dive: the crew made

Encumbered by up to 50 kilograms of mixed gas tanks and other equipment, the divers descended into the depths below. The only illumination was by torch light and the demanding depth of 73 metres meant that only ten minutes could be spent on the bottom. The divers had a slow 80-minute ascent to the safety of the surface.

For those of us waiting on the research vessel, the scene when the divers broke surface was one of jubilation and emotion. Landing near the conning tower, the divers had been able to confirm that the wreck was indeed the Australian submarine. Even the conning tower hatch by which the crew made their escape was still ajar. Boat horns echoed around the Sea of Marmara as the team signalled the success of the moment. The mystery of the AE2 was finally solved. the research vessel, the scene t

Since 1998 a succession of dives has been jointly undertaken by the Turkish Institute of Nautical Archaeology and the submarine Institute of Australia's AE2 Commemorative Foundation. As you know dives occurred in 2007, 2008, 2013 and 2014.

This joint maritime archaeology project, sustained over nearly two decades by the governments and agencies and maritime archaeologists of two nations, is unprecedented. One of AE2's legacies to both nations has been the opportunity to develop joint capability on a project at the cutting edge of underwater technology. Seventy three meters is a testing depth to operate at and AE2 has required the accumulated specialist skills acquired by Australian and Turkish deep divers.

Much has been learned from working on AE2 which will be of benefit to our maritime archaeologists as they discover, document and preserve the maritime heritage of both countries in the years ahead.

The protection of the site by buoy has now been put in place to ensure that no further accidental damage is caused to AE2. All that can be done to ensure that she remains in the best condition possible has now been done. I believe future generations will be impressed by this foresight and care.

In a broader sense AE2's legacy has consolidated and expanded the already very warm relationship between Turkey and Australia, which has been such a feature of the ANZAC Cove ceremonies for more than thirty years.

The commitment shown by Turkey to Project Silent Anzac is deeply appreciated. It is well understood in the Australian maritime community that since 31 April 1915 AE2 has been Turkish property and therefore it has always been Turkey's decision as to what can and should be done to explore and conserve the vessel. Australia is most grateful for these years of joint endeavour.

I recently received an example of this gratitude from 93 year old Captain Graham Wright, RAN (Retd), one of our surviving World War II naval veterans. His message to me reads:

On 21 November 1938 I was an 18 year old Australian Midshipman serving in the battleship HMS Malaya when I was sent to Ankara, as a member of the official party at the funeral of Kemal Atatürk. The cortege with its horse drawn flag-covered casket was escorted by nine armed guards of honour from foreign navies.

To my knowledge I am the only Australian still alive who was present at the funeral of the Father of the Turks.

Please convey my warm regards and congratulations to those assembled at the Project Silent Anzac conference and my appreciation for all the years of support that Turkey has provided in finding and conserving HMAS AE2.

This message from a very senior member of our naval veterans' community sums up the great goodwill which has been generated by the generosity shown by the Turkish Government, the General Staff, the Turkish Navy and the Turkish Institute of Nautical Archaeology during the course of this project.

I have been asked by RADM Peter Briggs Director of the AE2 CF to close Project Silent Anzac by handing over to my counterpart Admiral Recep Bülent Bostanoğlu, the key to the new hatch which now protects AE2's interior from unauthorized entry.

It occurs to me that Stoker left the hatch open deliberately to assist in the flooding of his submarine so that the secrets of his 'state of the art' technology would not be learned by the Turkish navy. How appropriate it is that a century on from that event the Chief of the Turkish Navy tonight becomes the guardian of the interior of AE2 and the keeper of the hatch key. I am sure that Stoker and his men would be the first to agree that this is a most fitting outcome for their AE2.

(Hand over of the key to Turkish CN)

The Australian commitment to the future of AE2 now passes from the AE2 Commemorative Foundation to the Australian National Maritime Museum whose director Dr Kevin Sumption is with us tonight.

I take this opportunity on behalf of the RAN to congratulate Peter Briggs and all the members of his committee, supported by the Australian Government, on reaching this moment when they can "pass the weight of AE2 " to Kevin and his team at the ANNM. They can take great satisfaction in achieving every one of the goals that were set. This includes educating the Australian public and school students on AE2's pioneering role in submarine history.

Well done indeed. BZ.

Thank You.