

HMAS MORETON COMMISSIONING ADDRESS

14 May 2016

Governor General: H. E. General the Hon. Sir Peter Cosgrove
Premier of Queensland: Anastacia Palaszczuk
Minister for Defence: the Hon. Marise Payne

The commissioning of a Shore Establishment is a rare event in modern times for the RAN. The commissioning of a ship, or an establishment is what we call a ‘Great Navy Day’; a cause for satisfaction and celebration. In the case of HMAS *Moreton* it is a welcome return to South Queensland of a name steeped in our naval history.

Brisbane has been ‘home port’ for many Australian naval vessels dating back to the nineteenth century and the era of the Colonial Navy.

HMAS *Moreton* was first commissioned in October 1942 as the base for the wartime Fairmile Motor Launches operating from the Brisbane River. *Moreton* was an important point of entry to the Navy for those thousands of Queenslanders who served in the RAN Volunteer Reserve as ‘hostilities only’ sailors and officers.

These were young men who ‘answered the call’ and served Australia and their home state all over the world defending our liberty. Many

lost their lives in action and we remember them with affection and with pride.

Brisbane was also transformed into a major USN submarine maintenance base at which a total of 80 submarines were dry docked over a three year period. We particularly remember with gratitude the five USN submarines lost with all hands which were based in New Farm - USS *Triton*, USS *Amberjack*, USS *Argonaut*, USS *Grampus* and USS *Seawolf*.

Members of the newly formed Womens Royal Australian Naval Service were also based at *Moreton*. These young women made a significant contribution as coders, wireless telegraphists, signallers and writers. *Moreton* was responsible for administering operations, intelligence and communications for staff attached to Allied Headquarters in Queensland and New Guinea.

Post war *Moreton* expanded to include the New Farm victualling Yard which had supported the British Pacific Fleet. In the 1970's the Australian Amphibious Squadron including the heavy lift ship HMAS *Tobruk* and six LCH operated from the wharves at *Moreton North*.

With the redeployment of ships and people and the scaling down of the Navy's presence in the late 1980's *Moreton* was decommissioned.

However the function of representing and administering naval shore based interests in Queensland south of the Tropic of Capricorn has continued at NHQ South Queensland ever since.

Logistic support to visiting ships has been an important role and NHQ has remained the home of the RANR and the Naval Cadets.

I thank for their service all those present who served in *Moreton*, particularly former Commanding Officers.

I also thank those who have served here diligently at NHQ South Queensland representing Navy in the three decades since decommissioning.

With the closure and sale of Bulimba Barracks, and the increase in the volume and tempo of naval activity in Brisbane, *Moreton* needs to be commissioned again as an RAN shore establishment.

Every state in Australia will be affected by the recapitalisation of the RAN's future fleet. It is anticipated that Brisbane's geographical location will make it a more significant port for Navy than it has been in the recent past. A ship's commissioning pennant and the Australian White Ensign will fly again in Brisbane signifying that Navy and the city have a shared future.