

## Chief of Navy Address at HMAS *Albatross* Divisions

HMAS Albatross

1 December 2017

It gives me great pleasure to be here today to witness such an impressive turn-out by HMAS *Albatross* and all those represented here from ships and resident units.

I am also pleased to be here to be able to take a moment to reflect on the contribution that the Squirrel AS350BA and Seahawk S-70B-2 helicopter types have made in support of Australia and her national interests as their service in the Australian Defence Force comes to an end.

Turning first to the Squirrels. They entered naval service with 723 Squadron for a long and distinguished career within the Fleet Air Arm in May 1984. They have been the foundation training aircraft for Fleet Air Arm aviators over the past 33 years.

And although not designed with maritime operations in mind, they filled a capability gap in the *Adelaide* class guided missile frigates until the introduction of the Sikorsky Seahawks.

Indeed, the RAN was the first Navy to operate the Squirrel at sea and, despite some scepticism about the aircraft's ability, they performed so well that they continued dedicated embarked operations until 1997, well after the introduction of the Seahawks.

The light and versatile Squirrel has proven to be one of the most successful airframes in RAN history, amassing an enviable record in both operations in training and doing so with remarkable reliability.

We also bid farewell today to the S-70B-2, affectionately known as the Bravo.

They have been in the Fleet Air Arm inventory for 29 years. Predominantly embarking in the *Adelaide* class FFG and later the *Anzac* class FFH, they have served on every Middle East Area of Operations deployment from the first Gulf War in 1991 until the first MH60R (Romeo) flight recently took up the baton.

In addition the Bravos have conducted wide ranging defence aid to the civil community ranging from bushfire suppression, maritime rescues and other domestic operational tasking during their proud service.

To the operators and maintainers of these aircraft — thank you. Your service has been often arduous, frequently dangerous, and always worthwhile.

You showed professionalism, courage and compassion in carrying out your duties – exactly what I expect, exactly what Australia expects – and I have not been disappointed.

You should be proud of your service and the contribution that you made to our Navy and our Nation.

Finally before I close — congratulations again HMAS *Albatross* on your fine turn out today.

The work done here at *Albatross* is not always easy and it is very important for the nation.

Whether you are a logistician, a maintainer or an operator; whether you are part of a project, a training organisation, or an enabling service your role is important in ensuring that the squadrons, commands, services and groups can achieve the operational outputs required of us by government and ultimately the Australian people.

Thank you.