

CHIEF OF NAVY HANDOVER OF COMMAND**VADM R.H. CRANE, AO, CSM, RAN****7 June 2011**

Good afternoon Air Chief Marshal Houston, Chief of the Defence Force; Mr Stephen Merchant, Acting Secretary; distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen,

Thank you all for being here today. Let me begin by remembering our Australian soldier tragically killed last night during operations in Afghanistan. His death reminds us yet again of the dangers our people face every day in Afghanistan and also of their selfless courage in continuing to serve our nation. Our thoughts and prayers are with his family and friends.

At 0001(k) tomorrow, I will pass command of the Royal Australian Navy to Vice Admiral Ray Griggs. I have known Vice Admiral Griggs for a very long time and I know that he and his family are passionately committed to our Navy values and mission.

He is an exceptional officer in whom I have always had enormous trust and respect and I know he will lead our Navy with the same outstanding professionalism, commitment, dedication and passion that I have observed in him over many years.

It has been my great privilege and honour to lead the Royal Australian Navy through the past three years – years that have been marked by profound reform, great challenge and the outstanding success of our people. Those years are not yet over, and Navy's future depends on the continued pursuit of excellence in shaping our culture and fleet for the next generation.

We are committed to change for the benefit and future of us all and I know that it will continue long after my departure. It is true that recent events have revealed some failings of the ethical and courageous leadership which we owe to all our people, but it provides impetus for our reforms and I will be watching keenly our successes to come in creating a supportive and inclusive leadership culture at all ranks and in all workplaces.

Operations

I could not close my term as Chief of Navy without mention of the pace of operations. In the last few years, Navy's value to our country has been ably demonstrated in the furthest reaches of the globe. For the twenty-sixth continuous rotation, HMAS *Toowoomba* is now deployed to the Middle East Area of Operations in support of maritime security and counter-piracy patrols. Our people have served on operations in Afghanistan, Iraq, Sudan, elsewhere in the Middle East, in East Timor and in the South West Pacific. These shore-based contributions, which include command of the ADF force in East Timor, showcase the professionalism and broad utility of Navy people. Less well-known but no less importantly, our clearance diving teams, MHCs and LCHs continue to identify and clear UXO around the Pacific, much of it left from the Second World War.

Of course, our international contribution stretches far beyond operations to incorporate an extensive program of engagement with our allies and the nations in our region. We are part of the Five Power Defence Arrangement and its active exercise schedule around Malaysia and Singapore; our strong alliance with the United States Navy sees us regularly exercising together in our waters, off Hawaii and around our region; in Exercise Northern Trident 2009 *Sydney* and *Ballarat* toured the globe; and in 2010, *Warramunga* was part of the re-enactment for the 60th anniversary of the historic landing at Inchon during the Korean War.

In our own waters, we play a key role in protecting Australia's maritime borders through Operation Resolute. Navy's response to incidents such as the explosion on SIEV 36 in April 2009 and the grounding of SIEV 221 on Christmas Island last December is testament to our people's dedication and tireless commitment in placing the safety of others ahead of their own. As Australians, we are in their debt.

The series of natural disasters we have suffered in the last two years have also brought out the best of our Navy people. *Cerberus* and the Fleet Air Arm worked tirelessly in the wake of Victoria's devastating Black Friday bushfires. HMAS *Cairns* personnel were involved in Op Yasi Assist only this year while HMAS *Huon* and our SMLs *Shepparton* and *Paluma*, together with a Mobile Deployable Geospatial Team and our Seaking and Seahawk helicopters, deployed to the Brisbane area in January to survey and help clear debris in the Brisbane River and Moreton Bay.

When Victoria was struck again, this time by floods, two of our Seahawks and their support staff were quick to provide assistance. All this is in addition to the hundreds of Navy people, especially from the FSUs, who volunteered to walk the streets and help clear debris, deliver aid, and comfort our communities in their time of need.

None of this is achievable without the unique experience, knowledge and skills of the sailors and Officers of the RAN. You can do, and have done, things that no one else in Australia can, and you are of critical importance to our nation and our future.

This is true of the fleet at sea, and it is also true of the support organisation that keeps them there – our supply and maintenance units, training centres, personnel managers, headquarters staff, Reserve members, and our specialist doctors, lawyers, dentists and chaplains.

Each and every group is an essential part of our operational capability and has been instrumental in ensuring that we, as the Royal Australian Navy, have achieved the tasks set for us by the Australian government. It is, in every respect, a team effort and I could not be more proud of your results.

Force 2030

Our level of skill and operational capability is excellent preparation for Force 2030, which is really just round the corner, with the entry into service of the first LHD expected in 2014 and the first AWD very shortly thereafter.

In February, I watched as Mrs Vickie Coates launched the first LHD hull and work has progressed very quickly since, both on the ship and on our amphibious deployment and sustainment capability. Air 9000, the project to deliver our new combat aircraft, is also moving ahead and the next eight years will see a complete transition in our Fleet Air Arm, with the new 808 Squadron of MRH90s due to commission later this year.

I cannot stress strongly enough the importance of being prepared for the challenge of transition. The Strategic Reform Program is addressing the acquisition, sustainment, financial and administrative aspects of our future force, and our NGN program is the source of the sustainable culture that will crew it.

Force 2030 is why we need NGN and SRP and why we have put them in place. I have confidence that they will deliver and that they will endure, because I know that far-reaching and permanent reform is what our Navy people want and deserve.

Personal Reflection

Retiring is a bittersweet moment for me, and for my family who have been my greatest support through the last forty-one years. The Navy I leave is vastly different from the one I joined as a Junior Recruit at HMAS *Leeuwin* in 1970. I was sixteen years old when I got on the train from the Gold Coast to Perth, signing up for 12 years service, a then unimaginable length of time.

Since then, our Navy has advanced immeasurably in technology, in composition and culture and in education and training. Today, we are a professional force - proud of our professionalism and heritage. Our people are focused on the ideal of service, and the Australian people recognise and respect them for it. When today's recruits and Officer Trainees have charge of the RAN, it will be again a very different force. That is the nature of what we do and I am proud to have been part of it.

Thanks

In leaving, there are many I must thank. To our supporting agencies – DMO, DSTO, DHA, Defence Families Australia, and many others – we depend on your support and I appreciate your commitment to our service.

To our colleagues in arms in the Australian Army and the Royal Australian Air Force, it has been my privilege to have shared with you the task of defending our home. It is only in

combining our single service excellence into a powerful joint culture that we can succeed. To the Australian people, thank you for the support you have given me and our Navy people.

Our ability to deliver on our mission is fundamentally enabled by the support we all receive from our families and loved ones. Theirs is often a very difficult task as they endure long periods of separation during deployments or have to deal with high workloads on the part of those supporting our seagoing fleet. I am acutely aware of the very real effect that this can have and I want to specifically acknowledge and thank our families for their ongoing support and for their understanding and compassion when things get tough on occasions. They are a very real and extremely important part of our Navy and we are all indebted to them.

Above all, to each member of Navy from the most junior to the most senior, I thank you, not just as the retiring Chief, but personally, for your hard work and your outstanding achievements. I know that it has come at great cost to yourselves and your families.

Most of all, thank you for your friendship, which I have been honoured to share for so long. Congratulations on a job well done, and I will watch with pride as you lead the Royal Australian Navy into its next generation.