

CHIEF OF NAVY ADDRESS**LAUNCH OF NUSHIP CANBERRA****VADM R.H. Crane AO, CSM, RAN
17 February 2011**

Good afternoon Presidente Xunta de Galicia, Mr Nuñez Feijoo; Your Excellency Ms McCarthy; Secretary of State for Defence Mr Mendez Martinez; Admiral Rebollo Garcia,; President of the Galician Parliament, Mr Pilar Rojo; President of SEPI, Mr de Robles; Navantia CEO Mr Cacho; Mayor of Ferrol, Mr Irisarri; Shipyard Managing Director Mr García Vilasánchez; Mrs Coates; distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen.

Today's launch is a significant day for the future of the Royal Australian Navy and I am privileged to share it with you. The hull we are launching represents the next step on the RAN's path to a defining new capability - the LHD, which will first enter service in 2013. Soon this vessel will become HMAS *Canberra* and she will be joined by her sistership, the future HMAS *Adelaide*.

Standing at the cusp of this new era, I am humbled by the sheer possibilities presented by what is now a well-engineered and designed hull and will one day become a ship of the line crewed by the men and women of the Royal Australian Navy. These ships will be the core of a refocussed Australian naval capability which emphasises amphibious operations. As an essential part of our defence strategy of projection on and from the sea, this LHD will take her place at the forefront of our future fleet.

Fittingly for her key Naval role, this ship is being launched in 2011, as we mark the one hundredth anniversary of the grant of our title, the 'Royal Australian Navy.'

I am especially pleased to attend this launch in Spain, a nation with whom Australia has shared a maritime relationship for over 400 years. In 1606, Luis Vaez de Torres was the first European to land on the islands in the strait between Papua New Guinea and mainland Australia, now called Torres Strait, and within five years of the first settlement at Sydney we received a port visit from Malaspina's corvette squadron. These are ties which we strengthen with today's ceremony and will continue to build in the years to come.

Many people have contributed to the enormous task of building and launching this ship. On behalf of the Australian Navy and the Australian people, I particularly thank Navantia and BAE Systems – Maritime. Without their expertise and professionalism, and that of all the dockyard workers, there would be no ship to launch. To the Australian Ambassador to Spain, Her Excellency Ms Zorica McCarthy, thank you too for your advocacy and support during this most critical national undertaking.

Equally, the project teams in the Australian Defence Materiel Organisation and in Navy, here and at home, and our counterparts in the Spanish Armada have played a pivotal role. I congratulate and thank you all for your extraordinary efforts so far.

I would now ask Chaplain Murray Lund to lead us in the Naval prayer.

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In 1811, the Prince Regent first invited a lady to launch the Royal Navy's newest ship, building on the centuries old launching ceremony, and we observe the tradition to this day. It gives me great pleasure to introduce Mrs Vickie Coates to launch the hull of the RAN's first LHD.

Rear Admiral Nigel Coates, a Commanding Officer of the previous HMAS *Canberra*, was keenly anticipating today's launch. As Commander Australian Fleet during the critical period of this LHD build, he was keeping a close eye on proceedings and looking forward to the day she would take to the water. Sadly, he passed away mid-way through last year but I know that, as one of our most expert mariners and devoted Naval Officers, he would be immensely proud of today's launch and of sharing in them through you, Vickie, and his daughter Stephanie.