

COOPERATION ACROSS THE TASMAN

We know that in peace as in war the armed forces of Australia and New Zealand will work together and that the imperishable traditions of Anzac will ever endure.¹

In this year of ANZAC commemoration, it is fitting to recognise more than 100 years of cooperation between the RAN and our contemporaries across the 'ditch'. Australia and New Zealand have always enjoyed a special camaraderie, and rivalry, exemplified by the ANZAC spirit and strengthened by the uniquely close relationship between our two navies.

In August 1903, the Australian Parliament passed the *Naval Agreement Act (1903) (the Act)*. The Act formed the basis of an agreement between the governments of Great Britain, Australia and New Zealand, committing a more powerful Royal Navy (RN) force to what was then known as the Australasian Station for a further ten years. The Admiralty agreed to maintain a squadron of definite strength in the Pacific while Australia and New Zealand, in return, agreed to help maintain the RN presence in the region both financially and through the provision of personnel. The result was the creation of the Royal Naval Reserve (RNR) (Australasian Branch) in which Australians and New Zealanders received training in the RN and in turn supplemented the crews of the ships in the RN squadron.

When the Act expired in 1913 the Australian portion of the RNR (Australasian Branch) transferred to Australian control and was re-named the Royal Australian Navy Reserve (Seagoing). Some 600 New Zealand members of the RNR (Australasian Branch) transferred to the RAN at the same time.² One of the achievements of the Act was to initiate cooperation between the embryonic naval forces of Australia and New Zealand.

It was not long after the beginning of World War I (WWI) that Australian and New Zealand forces were once again working together. In August 1914 HMA Ships *Australia* (I) and *Melbourne* (I), along with the French cruiser *Montcalm* and the small British cruisers *Psyche*, *Pyramus* and *Philomel*, escorted two New Zealand transport ships, *Monowai* and *Moeraki*, carrying some 1400 New Zealand troops, from Noumea to capture the German wireless station in Samoa. The fleet arrived at Apia on the morning of 30 August and the German Governor, his forces severely outnumbered, surrendered. The New Zealanders landed unopposed.

While New Zealand did not have her own navy during WWI, trans-Tasman rivalry still appeared to be alive and well at sea. The battlecruiser HMS *New Zealand* was a sister ship to *Australia* and had been paid for by the New Zealand Government. *Australia* and *New Zealand* formed part of the 2nd Battlecruiser Squadron (2BCS) in the Atlantic with *Australia* being the squadron's flagship, and the rivalry that developed between the two ships was everything one would expect between Australia and New Zealand. One seaman aboard *Australia* recalled: 'At evolutions, at exercises, at sport, regattas or any contest

that took place every effort was made to defeat the *New Zealand*.'³

Ironically, *Australia* missed the Battle of Jutland due to a collision with *New Zealand*. During the afternoon of 22 April 1916 in the North Sea the two ships collided in poor visibility forcing *Australia* to return to port for extensive repairs. To add insult to injury, *New Zealand* became flagship of the 2BCS firing more main armament rounds at Jutland than any other capital ship.

Although the New Zealand government had passed the *Naval Defence Act* in 1913, WWI forestalled any further naval development. In 1921, a New Zealand Naval Board and a New Zealand Division of the RN were established. Their practical application was similar to that of the previous RNR (Australasian Branch) whereby New Zealanders were trained in, and manned, the ships of what was then known as the New Zealand Squadron. A Royal Naval Volunteer Reserve (New Zealand) was also established in 1925.⁴



RNZN ratings undergoing training in the Tactical Trainer Building at HMAS Watson circa the 1960s

In January and February 1922, *Melbourne* conducted a three-week cruise in New Zealand waters as well as conducting exercises with the flagship of the New Zealand Squadron, HMS *Chatham*. *Melbourne* was greeted warmly at all the ports she visited and 250 members of her crew marched through the streets of Wellington where they were inspected by the Governor-General of New Zealand, Lord Jellicoe. Exercises with the New Zealand Division became a regular part of the RAN program during the inter-war years.

On 1 October 1941 the New Zealand Division of the Royal Navy ceased to exist and Royal assent was given to the creation of the Royal New Zealand Navy (RNZN). The ships of the new RNZN carried the prefix 'HMNZS' in place of 'HMS'. New Zealand had a navy in its own right.

The commencement of World War II (WWII), by necessity, increased cooperation between Commonwealth and other Allied navies. The training facilities at Flinders Naval Depot were made available to New Zealand sailors and specialist training was also made available with officers and ratings from New Zealand, as well as other Allied

navies, undertaking courses in ASDIC (SONAR) and Radio Direction Finding (Radar) at naval establishments *Rushcutter* and *Watson* respectively. Some 127 New Zealanders received training at *Watson* during the war.⁵ And whereas members of other navies were duly charged for accommodation in RAN shore establishments, New Zealand naval members were not.⁶

The RAN and RNZN coordinated patrols and convoy escort duties in the South Pacific. In January 1942 an area of operations was established known as the 'Anzac Area' extending from the east coast of Australia further eastward beyond New Zealand and Fiji, and into the Pacific Ocean. The Allied naval force in the area, 'Anzac Force', comprised Australian, New Zealand, and US units tasked with covering the eastern and north-eastern approaches to Australia and New Zealand.



Sailors from HMNZS Te Mana perform the Haka in farewelling HMAS Melbourne (II) and in particular her embarked detachment from the RNZN who sailed with the guided missile frigate to the Middle East Area of Operations in support of Operation SLIPPER in August 2013

The ties between the RAN and RNZN were maintained in the years after WWII with the implementation of formal training, exercise and exchange programs. RNZN members continued to undergo radar training at *Watson* with some 110 New Zealanders receiving training there between 1946 and 1953.⁷ In September 1949, the cruiser HMNZS *Bellona* and five RNZN Loch class frigates crossed the Tasman for exercises with the RAN. From 1949 to 1967 the two nations also shared the cost of maintaining the RN 4th Submarine Squadron in Sydney for 'live' anti-submarine training.

The RAN also offered material support to the RNZN. In 1949, the River class frigate HMAS *Lachlan* was loaned to the RNZN for service as a survey vessel and was purchased outright in 1962. Similarly, the *Bathurst* class corvettes, HMA Ships *Echuca*, *Inverell*, *Kiama* and *Stawell*, were transferred to the RNZN in 1952.

RAN and RNZN ships operated together once again during the Korean War. Just over a month after they were committed to the conflict on 29 June 1950, HMA Ships *Bataan* and *Shoalhaven* were joined in Korean waters by HMNZ Ships *Pukaki* and *Tutira*. From then until the ceasefire in July 1953, the RNZN maintained two frigates in the Korean theatre as part of the Commonwealth naval force, which also included RAN units, operating primarily off the Korean west coast.

Both Australia and New Zealand also took a greater interest in regional affairs during the 1950s which was reflected in both the RAN and RNZN's increasing involvement in multinational exercises in Southeast Asia. In

1951 Australia, New Zealand and the United States agreed to the ANZUS treaty which served as a cornerstone regional defence agreement through the second half of the twentieth century. Australia and New Zealand committed to the South East Asia Treaty Organisation (SEATO) and the Far East Strategic Reserve (FESR) in 1954 and 1955 respectively. These agreements committed the RAN and RNZN to increased levels of cooperation between each other, as well as other navies of Southeast Asia, the Commonwealth and other allied navies. Interoperability between the RAN and RNZN has been maintained over the years both through small-scale exercises and port visits, as well as larger multinational exercises such as KANGAROO and TALISMAN SABRE in Australia, TASMANEX in Australia and New Zealand, and RIMPAC in Hawaii.

As well as practical advantages in maintaining a strong operational relationship, common national interests have also brought the RAN and RNZN together. In support of the joint policy of protest against French atmospheric nuclear testing in the South Pacific, the fleet tanker HMAS *Supply* sustained HMNZ Ships *Otago* and *Canterbury* off Mururoa Atoll from June to August 1973. The following year, HMAS *Anzac* (II) visited New Zealand in support of the Commonwealth Games, and in 1977 HMA Ships *Melbourne* (II) and *Brisbane* (II) travelled in company with *Canterbury* to the United Kingdom to participate in Queen Elizabeth II's Jubilee Review at Spithead.

In March 1987, Australia and New Zealand embarked on one of the most significant and successful shipbuilding projects in either country's history; the *Anzac* Ship Project. Ten *Anzac* class frigates were built between 1996 and 2006; eight for the RAN and two for the RNZN. Their modular design enabled different sections to be built at different locations in Australia and New Zealand before being shipped to Williamstown for final assembly.

More recently RAN and RNZN ships have deployed variously as part of multinational forces conducting peacekeeping and humanitarian missions throughout the region, notably to Timor Leste, the Solomon Islands and in support of Operation SUMATRA ASSIST in the wake of the 2004 Indian Ocean tsunami. The RNZN has also been a regular participant in operations in the Arabian Gulf alongside RAN units, and RNZN personnel detachments have served in RAN ships deployed to the Middle East.

More than 100 years after the passing of the *Naval Agreement Act* (1903), the sense of cooperation and camaraderie between the two navies is as strong as ever.

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¹ The Hon Peter Fraser MP, Prime Minister of New Zealand, 1945 Commonwealth Navy Order 412/1945.

² Kathryn Young and Rhett Mitchell (eds), *The Commonwealth Navies 100 Years of Cooperation*, Sea Power Centre - Australia, Canberra, 2012, p. 130.

³ David Stevens, *In All Respects Ready: Australia's Navy in World War One*, Oxford University Press, Melbourne, 2014, pp. 206-215.

⁴ Grant Howard, *The Navy in New Zealand: An Illustrated History*, Jane's Publishing Co Ltd, London, 1981, pp. 34-44.

⁵ NHD historical file 146J – HMAS *Watson*, held by Sea Power Centre - Australia.

⁶ Commonwealth Navy Orders 241/1941 & 148/1942.

⁷ NHD historical file 146J – HMAS *Watson*, held by Sea Power Centre - Australia.

