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# ***Australian Fleet Update***

### **Operations**

In the latter half of 2012, Royal Australian Navy (RAN) frigates continued to support Operation Slipper (Middle East) with *Anzac* taking over from *Melbourne* in July. *Toowoomba* sailed on 28 December 2012 (the 30<sup>th</sup> rotation of a RAN unit to the Middle East since 2001). The RAN assumed control of Combined Task Force 150 in December, the 4<sup>th</sup> time the RAN has held the position.

The RAN and People's Liberation Army (PLA) Navy discussed counter-piracy in December. Three Chinese ships visited Sydney after undertaking counter-piracy operations in the Gulf of Aden.

Operation Resolute (Border Protection) continued to demand a high rate of effort with over 14,000 arrivals recorded during 2012. RAN personnel continued to safely and lawfully execute the Government's directions while facing intense public scrutiny. Their courage, professionalism and compassion were recognised with the Government announcing the establishment of the Australian Operational Service Medal (OSM) in July. Sixty personnel serving on Resolute were the first recipients of the OSM in December.

### **Seaworthiness**

In July, implementation of the new Seaworthiness Management System began. This system is similar to the airworthiness system and will make ships safer and more operationally effective within a tolerable risk.

In September, RAN and Defence Materiel Organisation representatives discussed ways to improve culture, practices and processes in ship repair and maintenance – critically important to Navy in addressing issues of technical integrity and improving engineering capability.

### **Submarines**

In December, the Coles Review into Submarine Sustainment found that the Collins-class fleet was competently designed and well crewed, however there had been no proper sustainment system in place since the boats entered service. A Service Life Evaluation Programme found there was no single technical issue that would prevent the Collins-class from achieving their theoretical platform life, planned withdrawal dates, or a service-life extension of seven years. A new submarine testing facility for Adelaide was announced.

### **Navy Culture**

Navy culture is improving. 'New Generation Navy' (NGN) indicators recorded fewer incidences of unacceptable behaviour. NGN is also evolving to embed a culture which supports seaworthiness.

### **Exercises**

RAN high-end warfighting skills were showcased during Exercise RIMPAC. The RAN led the maritime component of the exercise, commanding 41 surface ships, one aircraft carrier and six submarines from 22 nations. HMA Ships *Darwin* and *Perth* participated in live firings of Evolved Sea Sparrow Missiles at the Pacific Missile Range Facility. Collins-class submarine HMAS *Farncomb* conducted a successful torpedo firing against the former *USNS Kilauea*. A Seahawk

from 816 Squadron took part in RIMPAC's bio-fuel evaluation trial.

Following RIMPAC, the RAN hosted a number of multilateral exercises in waters off Darwin in September. The exercises developed interoperability in maritime operations in a regional coalition environment with participants from Brunei, Indonesia, France, Japan, New Zealand, Singapore and Thailand.

Off Cairns, HMA Ships *Labuan* and *Tarakan* spent a week at sea with two Papua New Guinea Defence Force patrol boats. Tobruk returned to sea and took part in an exercise in New Zealand with the New Zealand Navy.

### **Capability Milestones**

A second landing-helicopter-dock amphibious ship (LHD) was launched at the Navantia shipyard in Spain in July. The hull of LHD1 travelled 13,000 nautical miles to Australia arriving at BAE Systems' Williamstown dockyard in October.

The first of three air-warfare destroyer (AWD) keels was laid at the Techport facility in Adelaide in September. The AWD construction schedule was 're-baselined' to avoid a decline in naval ship building skills – the delivery dates for the ships will now be: HMAS *Hobart* (AWD01) – March 2016; HMAS *Brisbane* (AWD02) – September 2017; and HMAS *Sydney* (AWD03) – March 2019.

Two new east coast tugs, *Elwing* and *Waree*, replaced MSA *Bandicoot* and *Wallaroo* in December. The new tugs will provide a greater level of tug service to RAN vessels as well as visiting ships, including nuclear-powered warships.

Three of Navy's heavy landing craft, *Balikpapan*, *Betano* and *Wewak*, were retired after four decades of sterling service in December.

A decision was made to replace all of HMAS *Choules*' transformers before she returns to sea in April. Premature ageing was identified in all the transformers.

The Spanish auxiliary oil replenishment ship, SPS *Cantabria*, will deploy to Australia from February to November. It offers unique training opportunities as many of the ship's systems are similar to the new Canberra-class LHDs and the Hobart-class AWDs.

### **Diving Team and Defence Chiefs Honoured**

Clearance Diving Team 3 (CTD3), Contingent Number 4, has been recognised for its service in Vietnam. A United States Presidential Unit Citation was presented to it by the United States Ambassador at a ceremony in Sydney in November. CDT3 was deployed to the Mekong Delta between 1968 and 1969 and took part in Operation Sea Lords.

The Chief of the Defence Force, General David Hurley, and the Chief of Navy, Vice Admiral Ray Griggs, have each been awarded Indonesia's Meritorious Service Star.

### **Fleet Review**

An international fleet review will be held in Sydney on 3–11 October to celebrate the centenary of the entry of the first RAN fleet into Sydney Harbour on 4 October 1913. Some 40 foreign warships and 17 tall ships are expected to join 20 RAN fleet units in the review.

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