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JULY 2026 -- Volume 16 Edition 7

Editorial



Naval Communication Station Harold E Holt

After retiring from the Royal Australian Navy (RAN) in 2018, one of my goals was to hook on the caravan and explore the west coast of Australia. As a member of the RAN Band, I was fortunate to have travelled to many parts of Western Australia by air throughout my career, however as you know, there is so much to see in between the major centres.

Throughout the 1980's, the Victoria Naval Band from HMAS *Cerberus* would annually fly via RAAF C130 to the remote town of Exmouth on the North-West Cape. The purpose of the deployment was to support the United States Navy 4th of July celebrations at Naval Communication Station Harold E. Holt.



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Events Calendar

(see [Calendar](#) for full details)

NOTE:



*For information on
all Shrine*

ceremonies:

Phone: 03 9661 8100 or,

Email:

ceremonies@shrine.org.au

05-Aug - 1400 & 1900
Soundwaves Concert HMAS
Cerberus Band & Cinema
complex

09-Aug - 11:00 Battle of Savo
Island Service (HMAS
Canberra) - Shrine – Sanctuary
– NCCV

09-Aug – 12:00 Maltese-
Australia Assoc. – Operation
Pedestal – Shrine – WWII
Forecourt

18-Aug - 11:00 Vietnam
Veterans Day - Shrine –
Cenotaph

Back in the 1980's, Exmouth was isolated. The Potshot Inn was the centre of entertainment and relaxation. The town consisted of a couple of shops and the town hall and the American influence was present with left hand drive vehicles. Prawns and fishing were the major industries in town. I remember our Rock and Jazz groups playing at the Potshot Inn; our payment was prawns and fresh seafood. We would also play at a dance in the town hall. These were huge events with the whole town attending. This was well before the Ningaloo Reef and swimming with the whale sharks were popular tourist attractions.

To us Australian Defence Force personnel, the facilities at Harold E. Holt were first class and the American service personnel were well looked after. A bowling alley, cinema, swimming pool, gymnasium, were some of the facilities on the station. Hamburgers, hot dogs, fries, waffles, eggs sunny side up, post mix soft drink machines and ice-cream was served in the mess. Exmouth was an American town in Australia.

The station was commissioned as *US Naval Communication Station North West Cape* on 16 September 1967. On 20 September 1968, the station was officially renamed to *US Naval Communication Station Harold E. Holt* in memory of the late Prime Minister of Australia, who disappeared whilst swimming and was declared dead, presumed drowned, three months after the station was commissioned.

In 1991, an agreement was reached between the governments of Australia and the United States that would make the facility an Australian Naval Communication Station by 1999, a transition that began with a Royal Australian Navy officer taking command of the facility in 1992. Most of the US Naval presence ended in 1993 with the withdrawal of all US Naval personnel.



Station buildings in 1979

In July 2002, the Royal Australian Navy handed over operation of the station to the Defence Material Organisation. On 15 July 2008, Australia and the US signed a bilateral treaty governing the future joint use of the facility for the next 25 years.

The communication station was built at a time when the United States wanted to shore up global low-frequency coverage for its fleet of nuclear submarines during the height of the Cold War. The town of Exmouth was built at the same time as the communications station to provide

26-Aug – TBA - Defence Force School of Music "At Home Concert" - Simpson Barracks

27-Aug – 1900 - Naval Historical Society meeting - Clayton RSL - Sovereign bistro

02-Sep - 11:00 - Battle for Australia - Shrine - WWII Forecourt

03-Sep - 11:00 - Merchant Navy Day - Shrine - Sanctuary

11-Sep - 11:00 - Battle of Bita Paka - Shrine - Sanctuary

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Latest Videos and News Headlines

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VIDEOS

- Get to know the new Warrant Officer of the Navy WO Cheryl Collins
- HMAS Leeuwin Kraken deployment
- Get to know VADM Matt Buckley AM CSC RAN
- ADF | AARTS Programme
- Royal Australian Navy Band - Times Square Performance
- RAN Musicians perform in Old Mates pub in New York

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NEWS shorts.....

HMAS Sydney welcomed four federal parliamentarians on board during the sea phase of Exercise Rim of the Pacific (RIMPAC) off the coast of Hawaii.

The Mine Warfare Task Force (TF 177) has one of the most critical and hazardous missions of a maritime exercise: finding

support to the base and to house dependent families of US Navy and RAN personnel.

Navy Victoria Network member, Laurie Pegler, stated that he was one of the first RAN personnel posted to Harold E. Holt in December 1974. He said,

“One of the prerequisites for the posting was that you had to be married. When we first arrived, none of the RAN houses (ex-RAAF transportables) had air-conditioning or cyclone shutters. It was hot and dusty and very humid during the wet season. After complaints from our spouses, air-conditioning units were placed in only the main bedroom and for cyclone shutters the Defence Minister Lance Barnard provided each house with two rolls of masking tape to place crosses on windows. It was hoped that this would stop the windows from shattering. Whereas, the US navy houses were fully airconditioned and better equipped with real shutters to survive the harsh weather conditions.”



As can be seen, the masking tape doesn't last

The Naval Communication Station is a very-low-frequency transmitting station capable of sending messages to submarines deep underwater. Thirteen towers support hundreds of tons of wire antennae, criss-crossing like a spider's web to create a giant geometric pattern more than 400 hectares in area, hundreds of metres in



Tower Array

and neutralising hidden underwater mine threats that could endanger ships and crews.

Navy's 822X Squadron has flown the A-61 Integrator tactical uncrewed aerial system for the first time, marking a significant milestone in the evolution of Navy's uncrewed aviation capability.

In February, an Indonesian naval officer publicly acknowledged what had long been understood in the service: foreign submarines routinely transited Indonesian waters.

Deputy Prime Minister and Defence Minister Richard Marles visited the newly completed uncrewed aerial systems (UAS) facility at Jervis Bay recently.

Senior leaders and maritime specialists from Australia and the US participated in an area maritime security training and exercise program during Exercise Rim of the Pacific (RIMPAC) at Coast Guard Base Honolulu.

Pacific Partnership 2026 (PP26) mission personnel arrived in Sibolga, Indonesia, aboard the Royal Australian Navy Bay-class landing ship dock HMAS Choules (LSD 100) on July 20, 2026, marking the second mission stop of the U.S. Navy's largest annual multinational humanitarian assistance and disaster preparedness mission in the Indo-Pacific.

The U.S. Navy's expensive effort to install hypersonic missiles on three Zumwalt-class destroyers is two years behind

the sky. Tower Zero, once the tallest structure in the Southern Hemisphere at 387 metres, sits in the middle of the array and above the Helix House. Inside the Helix House, it looks like something lifted from the pages of a Jules Verne novel, with copper antenna tuning equipment supported by more than 100 tonnes of wood. Almost everything inside the Helix House is made of a special resin-infused wood composite, even the nuts and bolts. The station is the most powerful transmission station in the Southern Hemisphere and provides radio transmission to United States Navy, Royal Australian Navy and allied ships and submarines in the western Pacific Ocean and eastern Indian Ocean.

The region's military history stretches back to World War 2, when the North-West Cape was home to a US submarine and communications facility. Exmouth was also the launch pad for Z Special Units who went behind-enemy-lines raids on Japanese forces in Singapore, including the loss of 23 allied commandos during Operation Rimau.



The first major upgrade to the Helix House since the US Navy commissioned and opened the facility in 1967 is currently underway. Construction is on a rolling schedule to maintain assured communications with allied submarines operating in the region during the upgrade.

The Harold E. Holt Naval Communication Station is an important strategic asset that supports Australia's role in the AUKUS security partnership between Australia, the United Kingdom and the United States. The station's very low frequency (VLF) transmitters will continue to secure one-way communications with Australian, US and allied

schedule, according to government auditors.

Inflection, a global leader in neutral atom-based quantum technology, today announced a successful trial with the Royal Navy and MSUBs, marking the first-ever deployment of a quantum optical atomic clock on an underwater autonomous vehicle.

ADF and Royal Solomon Islands Police Force (RSIPF) explosive ordnance disposal (EOD) experts have discovered more than 11 tonnes of World War II-era munitions in Tuvalu's northernmost atoll.

Musician Seaman Grant Rowsell's musical journey began when he was eight years old, after his dad gave him a didgeridoo and encouraged him to express himself through music. Now, Seaman Rowsell is not only the first person to join the Royal Australian Navy (RAN) Band as a didgeridoo player, he is among the first of three First Nations members to represent the RAN on the global stage in the United States.

The Royal Australian Navy landing ship dock HMAS Choules has officially set sail from Subic Bay, the Philippines, to take part in Exercise Pacific Partnership.

When HMAS Supply passed Horsburgh Lighthouse on July 6, it was more than another navigation waypoint for the ship's first lieutenant, Lieutenant Luke Horsburgh.

In true Anzac spirit, two sailors were recognised for their commitment to their teams and

submarines operating while submerged across the Indian and Pacific Oceans in the future. As Australia prepares to acquire conventionally armed, nuclear-powered submarines under AUKUS, the Harold E. Holt facility is expected to become even more significant by helping maintain reliable communications with these vessels during operations. Its long-standing role in Australia–US defence cooperation, combined with ongoing investment in defence infrastructure around Exmouth, highlights the base's growing importance in supporting regional security, deterrence and interoperability among AUKUS partners.

As an addendum to this editorial, we have a little more about the adventures of the RAN Band.....

Bringing the Spirit of Australia to New York

The Royal Australian Navy (RAN) made a memorable contribution to one of the United States' most significant commemorative events, bringing Australian music, culture and Indigenous traditions to the heart of New York City during the United States Navy's International Naval Review.

Held in the Port of New York and New Jersey from **3–8 July**, the International Naval Review formed a centrepiece of celebrations marking **250 years since the Declaration of Independence**. The event brought together an unprecedented gathering of naval vessels and tall ships from more than 30 nations, celebrating America's rich maritime heritage while reinforcing global partnerships and the shared commitment to freedom of the seas.



RAN contingent Times Square

their service during Exercise RIMPAC. With the USS Arizona Memorial providing a poignant backdrop, RAN's Chief Petty Officer Edgar Dunsby and RNZN's Leading Seaman Thomas Sullivan were promoted at Ford Island, Pearl Harbor, Hawaii.

While the world has been watching China's rise, Japan has been in the midst of its biggest defence shift since World War II.

There is growing debate within the global space policy community about whether space is becoming a 'warfighting domain'.

Elbit Systems is exploring a new maritime surveillance concept that combines unmanned aircraft with converted commercial vessels, creating a new alternative to traditional naval aviation platforms.

USS Essex (LHD-2) is the centerpiece of large-scale additive manufacturing tests during Rim of the Pacific 2026 exercise, as the U.S. Navy and Marine Corps lean on modern machine-made parts to hone self-repair capabilities.

Veterans transitioning to civilian life are now able to continue accessing Defence bases for up to two years under a new program created in response to Recommendation 82 of the Royal Commission into Defence and Veteran Suicide.

Tuvalu Prime Minister Feleti Teo welcomed a Royal Australian Navy task unit to survey Nanumea Lagoon under Operation Render Safe. Mr Teo

Representing Australia, the RAN Rock Band and a three-member Indigenous Cultural Group delivered a vibrant showcase of Australian talent and culture throughout the week. Their performances combined iconic Australian rock classics with powerful demonstrations of Indigenous traditions, offering international audiences a unique insight into Australia's diverse cultural identity.

The Australian contingent received an enthusiastic reception during three performances in the iconic Times Square, where large crowds enjoyed the energy and professionalism of the Navy musicians and cultural performers. Their appearances highlighted not only the Royal Australian Navy's musical excellence but also Australia's enduring friendship with the United States and the importance of cultural diplomacy.



RAN Indigenous Cultural Group

The Indigenous Cultural Group also took to the stage as part of a prestigious joint concert featuring the United States Navy and His Majesty's Royal Marines at the Maritime Museum. Their performance celebrated the rich heritage of Australia's First Nations peoples, adding a distinctive Australian voice to an international program that showcased the traditions and talents of allied naval forces.

Throughout the week, the Royal Australian Navy's performers proved to be outstanding ambassadors for Australia, leaving lasting impressions through music, culture and camaraderie. Their participation demonstrated the important role cultural engagement plays in strengthening international relationships while proudly representing the values and diversity of the Australian Defence Force.

joined senior Tuvalu Government officials on board HMAS Diamantina after the minehunter arrived in Funafuti on July 1.

The Submarine Training and Systems Centre (STSC) at HMAS Stirling has officially opened a new submarine bridge simulator, enhancing the way submariners train for surfaced operations.

Navy's most senior sailor appointment, Warrant Officer of the Navy (WO-N), changed hands for the 11th time during a ceremony in Canberra on July 10. In accepting the 'weight' of leadership from outgoing WO-N Andrew 'Bert' Bertoncin, incoming WO-N Cheryl Collins acknowledged her predecessor's contribution and thanked him for his leadership and advocacy on behalf of Navy's sailors.

After nearly 50 years of service, Admiral David Johnston handed over command of the Australian Defence Force (ADF) to Admiral Mark Hammond at a change of command ceremony in Canberra on July 9.

The Royal Navy is a step close to launching drone boats from the skies after a pioneering trial which saw the first airdrop of its kind from a military transport aircraft.

People are missing the most important implication from China's test of a submarine-launched ballistic missile (SLBM) on Monday. It's not the signalling of China's power, though that was almost certainly in there. In part, it's what the test confirms:



RAN Band perform "Down Under" – Men at Work

View the YouTube video - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=patS4zOyqHs>

Yours Aye!
NVN Team

OUR JULY HERO



Admiral Sir Anthony Monckton Synnot KBE AO MiD

Anthony Monckton Synnot was a distinguished officer and one of the few Royal Australian Navy officers to reach full Admiral rank.

Born in Corowa, NSW, Synnot joined the RAN in 1939. During World War II, he saw extensive action in the Mediterranean aboard HMAS Stuart - notably at the Battle of Cape Matapan - and supported the evacuations of Greece and Crete. Following his survival of the sinking of HMS Punjabi, he served on HMAS Quiberon, participating in North Sea convoy duties and the North African landings.

Synnot steadily rose through the ranks. He commanded HMA ships Warramunga, Vampire, Sydney and Melbourne in the 1950s and 1960s, he later served as Director Joint Staff during the 1974 Cyclone Tracy relief efforts. Appointed Chief of Naval Staff in 1976, he was promoted to full Admiral in 1979 and served as Chief of the Defence Force Staff (CDFS) until his retirement in 1982. He championed modernising the defence force and was later the Chairman of the Australian War Memorial.

[Continue reading about our latest naval hero.....](#)

When hidden deep in the vastness of the ocean, America's ballistic missile subs are practically invulnerable. But berthed in port — or sailing on the surface while transiting to and from port — these powerful yet fragile boats can be sitting ducks for drones, mines and even anti-tank rockets.

Eight NATO countries, Denmark, Canada, Finland, Germany, Norway, the Netherlands, Sweden and Turkey, plan to link their military satellites into a "mega-constellation" to enable "high-speed communications, intelligence and missile tracking".

For hydrographic survey operator Leading Seaman Rebecca Churches, witnessing Navy Indigenous Development Program (NIDP) Intake 25 graduates on parade was a bittersweet moment.

The Royal Australian Navy sailed into a new chapter on July 7, with Vice Admiral Matthew Buckley assuming command from Vice Admiral Mark Hammond during a ceremony in Canberra. It marked the conclusion of Vice Admiral Hammond's tenure leading Navy and the commencement of Vice Admiral Buckley's appointment as the new Chief.

For young Indigenous woman Recruit Shartarni Brown, aspirations to become a medic in the Australian Defence Force (ADF) felt out of reach after high school, but completing the Navy Indigenous Development Program (NIDP) has brought her goal closer.



If you know of any of our Navy family who has crossed the bar and don't appear on our list below or Memorial Wall on our website, please don't hesitate to contact the webmaster at: webmaster@navyvic.net. If possible, list their Rank, Name, Number, the date of their passing and their age. Thank you.

- † LCDR G. Smith, 27 July 2026.
- † LWRMED J. Fazackerly (Culhane), 21 July 2026. Aged 64.
- † E.A. Power, July 2026.
- † LEUT T-L Ross, 19 July 2026. Aged 46.
- † NPC LCDR P. Flynn, 18 July 2026. Aged 75.
- † WOMTP4SM W.J. O'Brien, 17 July 2026.
- † LCDR D.W. Jenkins, R59589, 11 July 2026. Aged 80.
- † WRAN L. Russell, July 2026. Aged 74.
- † POWRMTD J.A. Alders, W103678, 08 July 2026. Aged 76.
- † LCDR D.R.F. Hase, R93849, 06 July 2026. Aged 79.
- † R.A. Gorman, 06 July 2026.
- † D.A. Reid, 04 July 2026.
- † POET G. Cruickshank, 03 July 2026.
- † POSE C. Whittington, July 2026.
- † CMECH H.W. Gilleland, R105524, 02 July 2026. Aged 79.
- † ABUCSM S.T. Nihill, R95011, 01 July 2026. Aged 77.
- † AB G.J. Stockdale, 7670NS, 01 July 2026. Aged 88.
- † LCDR P.H. Gardner, O.1962, 01 July 2026. Aged 81.
- † CMDR G. Sproule, 29 June 2026.
- † WRWTR J. Bayley (Smith) WR/2440, 27 June 2026. Aged 100.
- † CMDR R.J. Hannan, 26 June 2026. Aged 90.
- † ERA B.J. Hobbs, R42762, 26 June 2026. Aged 78.
- † CMDR P.T. Meakin, R111264, 20 June 2026. Aged 84.
- † ABTEL A.W. White, 23686, 15 June 2026. Aged 103.
- † NAMA E1 R. Thomas, R52716, 13 June 2026. Aged 87.

All of the above names now appear on the special [Memorial Wall](#) of our website.

Lest We Forget

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Able Seaman P.D. Mackintosh was at his aircraft defence post when he saw two torpedoes streak past the port side of HMAS Canberra I. The Brisbane sailor watched as the torpedoes continued into the darkness moments before the heavy cruiser came under devastating attack.

The Royal Navy has successfully launched a strike-capable drone from a ship at sea, marking a significant step forward in the UK's drive to create a hybrid naval force to defend against evolving threats.

From 1 July, work undertaken lawfully in Australia by journalists, think tank analysts, academics and others may be characterised as criminal under Chinese law.

Chief Petty Officer Simon Greenwood has come to the end of his final sea posting after 36 years in Navy. He will step off HMAS Sydney in Pearl Harbor, Hawaii, after nearly two years as the hull technical manager on board.

HMAS Sydney opened the gangway to about 3000 military personnel and their families keen to tour an Australian warship as part of Exercise Rim of the Pacific (RIMPAC). Sydney was one of 21 ships from around the world to welcome guests on board during the RIMPAC open ship day.

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