



COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA

PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES



**HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES**

**PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS**

**Centenary of the Royal Australian Navy**

**SPEECH**

**Monday, 4 July 2011**

BY AUTHORITY OF THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

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## SPEECH

**Date** Monday, 4 July 2011  
**Page** 7530  
**Questioner**  
**Speaker** Mr ROBERT

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(Fadden) (NaN.NaN pm)

Mr ROBERT (Fadden) (19:2 0): I rise to support the brilliant motion by the member for Bennelong in recognising 100 years of service of the Royal Australian Navy and recognising the unique contribution made by the Royal Australian Navy not only to our national defence and security but also to the wider cultural fabric of our nation.

The motion seeks to recognise the naming of Australian Navy by King George V on 10 July 1911—in fact, the anniversary is in six days time—as a significant step forward towards Australia's independence from colonial rule, with independence having come a mere 11 years earlier. It also notes the significant role played by the electorate of Bennelong in the development of the Royal Australian Navy, particularly the construction of Halvorsen ships in Ryde. So it is fitting that this parliament rises to recognise 100 years of distinguished service.

It would be remiss of me as a graduate of the Royal Military College of Duntroon not to also mention that this year of course is the centenary of RMC Duntroon, which has for 100 years been putting out Australian military officers who have fought on the battlefields across the world.

But tonight we focus on the senior service, the Navy. I am sure the member for Bennelong has discussed the Navy's first maritime battle against the German light cruiser the SMS *Emden* seeking to move against Direction Island in the Cocos groups on 9 November. The first sea battle of course was the *Emden* versus HMAS *Sydney*. Whilst *Sydney* was to indeed lose four men killed in action and 13 wounded, the *Emden* sustained significantly larger damage with over 131 killed in action during that conflict.

Since then the Royal Australian Navy has distinguished itself from the launching of two submarines AE1 and AE2 in the First World War through to a more substantial fleet; in fact, one of the favourite maritime stories I share is of an AE1 stuck in the Dardanelles. As it sought to move through that thin sliver of water, it got stuck on the ocean floor directly below a significant fortified position on the cliffs of the Dardanelles. As the tide went out, the superstructure of the AE1 was exposed. Unfortunately, the canons in

the fort, when lowered down, could not lower that far down into the ocean because of the proximity of the submarine to the cliffs. The submarine endured small arms fire until the tide rose and the AE1 slipped silently under the water. Could you imagine being a submariner inside your tin can whilst enemy combatants fired upon you? Such was the mettle of the Royal Australian Navy, which at that point was a mere three years old.

It is also important to realise that when our navy took our fighting men to Gallipoli, they left from Albany in Western Australia in 1949. Two Royal Australian Navy ships were taking our military to fight escorted by a Japanese warship. It just goes to show that our maritime cooperation with countries in our region stretches back almost 100 years.

It is fitting also that this week we remembered the greatest maritime loss of all time, which was the sinking of the *Montevideo Maru* sunk by the USS *Sturgeon*, an American submarine. Of course the *Montevideo Maru* was carrying over 100,000 prisoners of war and civilian prisoners and was lost. I have been public in my call for us to spend time and resources and indeed treasure to find the *Montevideo Maru* as we have spent time, resources and treasure finding HMAS *Sydney* and of course recently the HMAS *Centaur*. The *Montevideo Maru* is our nation's most significant naval disaster, and the ship deserves to be found. I have had communication with the great ship hunter who found the *Centaur* and HMAS *Sydney*, who has a fairly good bearing on where the *Montevideo Maru* would be. It is also instructive to note that, during World War II, over 170 submarines operated from Fremantle. It was the second largest submarine base in the world. We do indeed have a rich naval history.

Our modern navy will undergo significant changes: two LHDs are coming on board, as are three air warfare destroyers. There will be the replacement of our minesweepers and our hydrographic and Armidale class vessels with over 20 littoral ships and of course the submarine replacements. Our current operations include frigates in the Gulf where we have had one frigate continuously since 2001 and the work of our Armidale class patrol boats which continue to provide day and night border protection. We indeed have much to be proud of. (*Time expired*)