



NAVY LEAGUE OF AUSTRALIA
WESTERN AUSTRALIA

DOWN THE VOICEPIPE



Now Is The Time For Change

Issue No. 2 (June/2025)

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McDonnell Douglas AV-8B II Harrier conducting deck landing procedures during flying operations onboard USS Wasp in the Gulf of Aqaba



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DEFENCE UPDATE :

Australian Navy Finally Accepts First Arafura-class OPV

The Australian Department of Defence has accepted the first Arafura class Offshore Patrol Vessel, NUSHIP Arafura, more than three years after it was launched.

The Australian Department of Defence provided the following press release

Defence has accepted the first Arafura class Offshore Patrol Vessel, NUSHIP *Arafura*, for further test and evaluation ahead of delivery to the Royal Australian Navy.

NUSHIP *Arafura* is the first of class vessel delivered under project SEA 1180, built by Luerssen Australia at the Osborne Naval Shipyard in South Australia.

This project will deliver six Arafura class Offshore Patrol Vessels to Navy, with the first two constructed at Osborne. The remaining four vessels are under construction at Henderson in Western Australia. The Arafura class vessels will be part of a wider Navy Minor War Vessel Fleet supporting civil maritime security and enhanced regional engagement in the Southwest Pacific and maritime Southeast Asia.



NUSHIP Arafura Prior To Departure Osborne Shipyard

Pic : Matt Welsby

Deputy Secretary Naval Shipbuilding and Sustainment Jim McDowell said the delivery of the first Arafura class Offshore Patrol Vessel was an important milestone in the Australian Government’s investment in Naval Shipbuilding and Sustainment.

“The delivery of the first of class vessel to Defence highlights Defence’s commitment to working through complex projects to deliver critical capability to our Australian Defence Force, built here in Australia,” Mr McDowell said.

NUSHIP *Arafura* will now sail to its homeport at HMAS *Stirling* in Western Australia, before commissioning into the Royal Australian Navy fleet later this year.

When *Arafura* was launched in December 2021 at the Osborne Naval Shipyard, it was intended to be the first of 12 ships armed with 40mm main guns. They were destined to replace the Royal Australian Navy’s (RAN) fleet of smaller Armadale and Cape class patrol boats in their entirety.

Instead, as NUSHIP *Arafura* finally approaches entry into service, it is armed with a 25mm cannon and is one of only six vessels.

Those six ships, rather than making up the RAN’s patrol force, will instead constitute less than half of the Navy’s patrol force going forward. In their place, Austal-built Evolved Cape class patrol boats, which were originally set to provide only an interim capability between the Armadale and Arafura classes, have been commissioned into the RAN and ordered by the Australian Border Force.



NUSHIP Arafura With NUSHIP Eyre Astern

Pic : Matt Welsby

Delays in the program has disappointed the RAN and Defence, who have been forced to once-again assign frigates to border patrol work, and industry alike. Indeed, the company’s experience with the Arafura class program appears to have so soured Luerssen Australia that its parent company, NVL Group, has announced plans to divest from the country. In October 2024, via the Australian Securities Exchange, Civec announced a deal with NVL Group which will see the latter’s stake in Luerssen Australia sold to Civec pending Australian Government approval.

What caused the program, which appeared simple in nature, to experience such delays and issues is the subject of intense debate in Australia. While the exact causes of the problems may never be known, the Australian National Audit Office (ANAO) has derived lessons learned from the process that bode poorly for Australia’s Sea 3000 project:

“Inadequate timeframe to conduct procurement can diminish the opportunity for due diligence during tender evaluations. Providing sufficient time for due diligence is crucial to ensure the integrity and effectiveness of the procurement process,” the ANAO concluded in its annual report on Defence procurement.

“The use of reference ship designs from other navies provided reassurance in the procurement process but it remains crucial to thoroughly understand the intended capabilities and requirements, and ensure alignment with project objectives,” it further stated.

The History and Frustration with the lack of information with the Arafura-class Offshore Patrol Vessels

Since the launching of only two (2) Arafura Class Offshore Patrol Vessels (OPV) within the last two and a half years, the current Government had failed and failed dismally with the replacement of the aging Armidale Class Patrol Boats.

The OPV Arafura-class offshore patrol vessels program was approved by the previous Government in 2017, which was a \$4.7 billion program that has mysteriously disappeared from view. At a time when it was preoccupied with unauthorised arrivals by sea, an improved maritime law enforcement capability that could operate in the conditions that were pounding and breaking the Navy’s Armidale-class patrol boats was a high priority.

Comparable to the future frigate program which was making its way through Department of Defence’s convoluted process plan at the same time, SEA 1180, the OPV project, was intended to select a mature, in-service design that would minimise risk and with the capability to be quickly built.

Unlike the future frigate program, Defence did in fact select a mature, in service OPV design—the German company Luerssen’s OPV80 that was already in service with the Bruneian navy as the Darussalam class. Luerssen optimistically viewed SEA 1180 as a key first step into the growing Indo-Pacific market.

With a budget of \$4,689 million, the tender was to construct 12 of the 1,640 tonne vessels to be named the Arafura class in Australian service. And with an experienced designer and shipbuilder as the prime contractor and a mature design, what could go wrong ?

There were a few wrinkles at the start. For example, the Government was equally preoccupied with the optics of a shipbuilding ‘valley of death’ at Osborne in Adelaide and so directed the first two of the 12 ship class be built in there to bridge the ‘gap’ between the end of the Hobart destroyer program and the start of frigate construction.

The remaining 10 were to be built at the Henderson Marine complex in Western Australia by Luerssen’s partner, Civec, a company with deep experience in complex manufacturing for the resource sector, but little in shipbuilding.

Nevertheless, things started well. Construction of the first vessel commenced on schedule and even ahead of schedule on the first one in Western Australia. In October 2020 the Australian National Audit Office (ANAO) released a performance audit the project. Compared to the

ANAO’s dismal assessment of most Defence projects, SEA 1180 received an almost glowing review. Things were going so well that the previous Government announced in January 2021 that a new class of mine warfare vessels would be based on the Arafura design (whether it was an appropriate design for that role is a separate issue). Yet in time-tested fashion and financial disaster, the Department of Defence managed to snatch defeat from the jaws of victory.

First there was the vessels main armament and Defence had selected the OTO Marlin 40mm gun for the Arafura rather than the Bofors 57mm gun in the original design, but ultimately admitted it could not integrate it into the vessel which was an admission which still demands an answer as to “why not” and what reason ? Again, these smacks of the favoured saying “if it’s not broken, why try and fix it “. For some unfathomable reason, Australian defence planners have time and time again attempted to reinvent the wheel, which was already a tested and proven system just beggars’ belief.

Instead, it would recycle 25mm main armament weapons from the Armidale Class Patrol Boats. Since the Navy had already removed the anti-ship missiles from the original design in Bruneian service, and the Arafura could not embark a combat helicopter, the new vessel would have no more firepower than a patrol boat one-fifth its size.

Another troubling decision which was made during the Australian design/modification stage, was – why was the capability of the flight deck to operate helicopters severely downgraded to just UAV’s – surely these vessels (as had been designed by the manufacturer (Lurssen)) would have added additional operating efficiencies in support of other fleet units during maritime operations. Especially extending the tasking time of helo’s when having the availability to refuel or provide crew rest time when the aircraft is operating away from its normal operating platform. Its lack of warfighting capability would come back to haunt it.



Then came the delays. Initial Materiel Release (i.e. delivery of the first vessel) was originally planned for December 2021,

subsequently moved to January 2024. Initial Operational Capability (i.e., first vessel able to conduct operations) was originally planned for December 2022. This was then moved to August 2024. Ultimately the Government placed SEA 1180 on the projects of concern on 20 October 2023, the naughty corner for Defence's most underachieving projects, but did not publicly state why or what needed to be done to remediate the project. How did the Arafura end up there? Some delays are attributed to Covid-19, but the ANAO MPR states that in 2022, Defence identified that changes were required to improve the

structural fire protection of the ship and other safety design changes, prior to conducting sea acceptance trials. It is one of the iron laws of shipbuilding that the later in a project that design changes are introduced, the greater the cost and schedule implications will be. Since construction of the first ship has been completed, the flow-on effects of design changes will be very significant.



NUSHIP Arafura Departing The Shiplift At Osborne Shipyard

Pic : Matt Welsby

But one can only wonder how Defence selected a mature, in-service design that has such significant fire safety issues that it cannot be brought into service. Was this not examined during the ship's fire protection systems when contender vessels were being considered? Or did the Navy identify it as an issue at the time but simply assume it could certify the ship anyway because it is, well, the Navy? Smacks somewhat of another financial oversight with the two "rust buckets" purchased from the USN in 1994 at an initial cost of \$61million but blew out to more than \$200million.

The big blow, however, came from the references of the *2024 Enhanced Lethality Surface Fleet Review* that followed the *2023 Defence Strategic Review*. The Surface Fleet Review assessed that, *'The OPV is an inefficient use of resources for civil maritime security operations and does not possess the survivability and self-defence systems to contribute to a surface combatant mission. Therefore, the number of OPVs to be acquired should be reduced from 12 to just six....'* Essentially the review concluded what should have always been apparent, namely that in an age of great

power tensions, a medium-sized navy could not afford the luxury of spending nearly \$4.7 billion on 12 1,640-tonne constabulary vessels that basically, have no warfighting capability.

The Government accepted that proposal and the program had been curtailed to six vessels, essentially those already under construction. But it is doubtful whether there will be significant savings; at the start of the financial year, the

project had already spent \$2,144 million of its budget before any vessels had been delivered to Defence.

This is not the only cost. The Arafura's were meant to replace the Armidale-class patrol boats, removing the need for another class of patrol boats in the Navy.

Due to the delays in SEA 1180 and the Armidale's running out of life, the Navy has acquired a new fleet of Cape-class patrol boats anyway (although it is not entirely clear how much of this was driven by capability requirements and how much to

ensure a flow of work to Austal, the West Australian shipbuilder who was not selected for the OPV project).

Meanwhile, hopes of the OPV forming the basis of a new class of mine warfare vessels have evaporated, with the capability being removed from Defence's Integrated Investment Plan and mine warfare in general in total disarray.

With its Indo-Pacific dreams also in disarray, Luerssen recently revealed it was selling its subsidiary Luerssen Australia to Cvmec, essentially admitting they had had enough of dealing with the Australian Department of Defence and joining the long list of companies who were burned by their engagement with such a fickle customer and who can blame them. Despite its prior lack of shipbuilding experience, Cvmec expressed its confidence in its ability to complete the project.

So - what is the way forward for the Arafura? The Surface Fleet Review suggested the reduced fleet of six Arafura's should have a role 'focused on civil maritime security operations and enhanced regional engagement in the Southwest Pacific and maritime Southeast Asia.' It also stated that 'further investigation should be undertaken to determine how the OPVs could contribute to other mission sets. So far Defence has not revealed what those mission sets could be. But even before the curtailment of the program, previous suggestions with militarily-useful roles for the Arafura including as a mothership for autonomous vessels, employing its flight deck, rear slipway and space for shipping containers.

The good news is that sea trials of the first ship have finally begun, but without any fanfare or even a media release from a government generally anxious to announce an intent to acquire a new photocopier sometime before the end of the decade. As has been noted - 'personal imagery and comments by officials, industry representatives at builder Luerssen Australia and local ship spotters on various social media platforms exclusively make up all information on this notable step for a major, if troubled defence procurement.' But there is no word on whether Defence is now willing to accept the ships into service or on potential missions sets. Overall, it appears that the Arafura-class remains the Navy's unloved orphan child with no clear pathway to a fruitful adulthood.

But the Australian taxpayer should demand better. Numerous commentators have expressed concern at how little value Australia gets from its \$55.7 billion defence budget. Failed projects such as the Attack-class submarine which ultimately spent close to \$4 billion and delivered no capability are (only) one reason for this. Australia just simply cannot afford to blow another multi-billion shipbuilding program. We must find a meaningful return on investment for the taxpayers who ultimately have footed the bill for this depressing tale. As has been proven time and time again, Australia has a woeful global reputation of managing to turn a simple evolution into a damnable bleeding financial disaster with absolutely nothing to show for it at the end of the day !

And then there is the issue of lessons learned for the Government's massive, planned shipbuilding program. Defence is currently embarking on another shipbuilding project that is meant to select a mature, in-service design,

namely the general-purpose frigate program. That is the one that is meant to stop the RAN from becoming a navy without any warships. There is no room for error as the Anzac frigates, already overmatched in our region, start to age out.

So – What's Next

But with Defence managing to botch the OPV program, we have little confidence in not its ability to deliver the General-Purpose Frigate (GPF). As always, transparency is the best remedy, both to learn what went wrong in the OPV project and to prevent it occurring again in the GPF project. As always, Defence is doing its utmost to ensure that there is no transparency or scrutiny of its performance. Ensuring its failures remain ghosts are what it is best at and sadly, for those who should and must be held accountable for these failings and face legal process for gross mismanagement, will not happen.

All Photographs – Compliments Of Matt Welsby



Naval Sayings

Hunky-Dory: To describe a situation as being pleasant, moving as expected, going ok

History: This naval saying is thought to come from American Sailors who used the term to describe a popular street in Japan called Honcho-Dori which was frequented by lonely sailors.

No Room to Swing a Cat: A small or confined space.

History: When a sailor was to be punished by the cat o nine tails, the entire crew was required to attend and watch. Consequently, there was no room to swing the whip.

An invitation to join the

NAVY LEAGUE OF AUSTRALIA



The Navy league of Australia was established in Australia in 1900, and in 1950 became an autonomous national organisation with a Federal Council and Divisions covering all States and Territories. Its aim today, as it was in 1900, is to create an interest in the sea and to keep before the Australian people the fact that we are a maritime nation and that a strong Navy and sound maritime industry are indispensable elements to our national wellbeing and vital to the freedom of Australia.

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To become a Member of the League, you must not need to have had any previous maritime experience. You merely need an interest in maritime affairs. Simply complete the application form below, and post it, together with your first annual subscription of \$50 which includes the four quarterly editions of the Navy, to the Hon. secretary of the division of the Navy league in the state in which you reside, the address of which are as follows:

New South Wales Division:

GPO box 1719, Sidney, NSW 2001.

Victoria Division:

PO Box 314: Bentleigh, Vic. 3204.

Queensland Division:

PO Box 620 Morningside QLD 4170.

South Australian Division:

PO box 3008, Unley, SA 5061.

West Australia Division:

PO box 735, Fremantle, WA 6959.

If you live in Tasmania, please post the form to the Hon. Secretary of the Victoria Division. If you live in the ACT or the NT, please post the form to the Hon. Secretary of the NSW or South Australian Division respectively.

Subscriptions are due on 1 July of each year, and your membership will be current to 30 June immediately following the date on which you join the league, except that if your first subscription is received during the period one April to 30 June in any year, your initial membership will be extended to 30 June in the following year.

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THE NAVY LEAGUE OF AUSTRALIA

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The Navy league of Australia

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Subscriptions are due on the 1 July each year and your membership will be current to the 30 June immediately following the date on which you join the League, except that if your first subscription is received during the period 1 April to 30 June in any year, your initial membership will be extended to 30 June in the following year.

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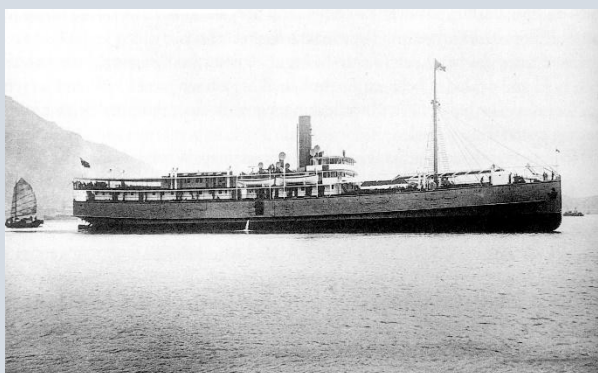
On receiving your application banking details (EFT) will be forwarded to you by your state division with an introductory letter.

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The RAN's Chinese Coastal Steamers

With the onset of World War II in September 1939, the Royal Australian Navy (RAN) began requisitioning merchant vessels to supplement the fleet and release warships for operational duties around the world. These unique vessels served as coastal patrol vessels, stores issuing ships, amphibious landing ships, in fact, they were employed in any activity where there was the greatest need. Hundreds of ships and small craft were requisitioned into war service throughout the Commonwealth with many of them retaining their original, often colourful, names. Amongst them were HMA Ships *Ping Wo*, *Poyang*, *Whang Pu* and *Yunnan*.

These four ships were engaged as coastal streamers owned by Chinese subsidiaries of British shipping companies and were all of a similar size, between 2,600 and 3,300 tons.



HMAS Whang Pu – Hong Kong 1943
Pic : Australian War Museum

Ping Wo and *Whang Pu* had both been requisitioned by the Royal Navy (RN) in 1942 and were in various stages of refit in Singapore when it became glaringly apparent that the island would soon fall to the Japanese armed forces. On 2 February 1942, these two vessels merged with a large number of Allied warships and merchant vessels which were evacuating the Port of Singapore up until the final surrender of the island on 15 February 1942.

The two ships made their way to the Australian west coast with *Ping Wo* enduring the more eventful passage as she participated in the longest tow in Australian naval history. **HMAS Vendetta** was undertaking an extensive refit in Singapore in 1942 and could not be made seaworthy in time to escape the Japanese advance. With only a skeleton crew onboard, the decision was made to tow *Vendetta* from Singapore to Melbourne, a journey of some 4,320 nm (8,000 km) which would take some 72 days. *Ping Wo* was one of five ships involved and handled the tow from Batavia to King George Sound (Albany, Western Australia) from the 17th February to 24th March. With doubts about the seaworthiness and ability of *Ping Wo* experiencing the turbulent waters of the Great Australian Bight, the tow was handed over to the smaller but sturdier SS *Islander*. *Ping Wo* remained in company with *Vendetta* and *Islander* for a time as she continued on to Melbourne and, indeed, nearly fell victim to the waters of the Great Australian Bight. *Vendetta*'s Commanding Officer, Lieutenant WG Whitting noted at one point "*Ping Wo* has completely disappeared. We last saw her running before the gale like a surfboard."

During the tow across The Bight, three towlines were snapped because of the foul weather conditions, and progress at some points was as low as 1.5 knots (2.8 km/h) but *Ping Wo* miraculously did make it across the Bight, and was then duly commissioned as HMAS *Ping Wo* on 22nd May 1942.

Whang Pu arrived in the Port of Fremantle on the 2nd March 1942 and then served as a mobile repair ship and stores carrier in the Royal Australian Navy (RAN) during the period 1943 to 1946. She was built as the *Whang Phu* at the Taikoo Dockyard and Engineering Company, Hong Kong in 1920. She was a 3,200-ton passenger and cargo vessel operated by the China Navigation Company, based out of Hong Kong and from 1920 until 1941 she operated in the coastal waters and major rivers of China carrying passengers and general cargo.

Builder	Taikoo Dockyard and Engineering Company, Hong Kong
Commissioned	1 October 1943
Decommissioned	22 April 1946
Dimensions & Displacement	
Cargo	As a cargo ship Whang Pu could carry up to 2,500 Tons of coal and general stores
Length	103 metres
Beam	14 metres
Draught	3.5 metres
Complement	62 Officers and Sailors and could accommodate up to 1,000 passengers in fair comfort for short journeys.
Crew	

In late 1941 *Whang Pu* was requisitioned by the RN for conversion to a submarine depot ship in Singapore, however, due to the heavy fighting in Malaya and the frequent bombing of the dockyards, she departed Singapore on 2nd February 1942 and dispatched to Fremantle, Western Australia. Upon arriving at Fremantle, on 2 March 1942, she was utilised as an accommodation ship for Royal Netherlands Navy submarine and minesweeper crews that had escaped to Australia following the capture of the Netherlands East Indies by Japanese forces in March 1942.

Whang Pu was handed over to the RAN in early September 1943 and duly commissioned as HMAS *Whang Pu*, at Fremantle, on 1st October 1943 under the command of acting Lieutenant Commander George Owen, RANR (S). Soon after, the ship sailed to Melbourne for conversion to a mobile repair ship. This work also included the fitting of a single Bofors gun and three Oerlikon 20 mm anti-aircraft guns for self-defence. HMAS *Whang Pu* sailed from Melbourne on the 18th of April 1944 and spent the next four weeks in Sydney loading stores and preparing for her voyage to New Guinea. HMAS *Whang Pu* departed Sydney on 23rd May and sailed, via Brisbane, to Milne Bay arriving there on the 6th of June 1944.

The vessels work was important but far from glamorous. Her ships company conducted repairs to engines and other equipment in motor launches and corvettes.

Maintenance teams were sent to nearby ships to conduct boiler cleaning, thus sparing the ships company of these ships that arduous task.

Her storemen issued clothing, provisions and building material to ships and units ashore. Special teams were also sent ashore to clear vegetation, fill in shell and bomb craters and collect Japanese ordnance for dumping at sea. Her medical officer and sick berth attendants also provided treatment to personnel from smaller vessels. HMAS *Whang Pu*'s supply officer became a popular man, providing pay to the crews of many of the smaller RAN vessels as well as being the sole Commonwealth Savings Bank representative for the many RAN vessels operating in New Guinea waters.

Poyang and *Yunnan* did not have to escape the oncoming Japanese in Singapore as they were already in Australian waters. *Poyang* had arrived in Broome from southern China on the 19th of December 1941, whilst *Yunnan* had arrived in Fremantle from Singapore on 23rd of December. Both ships were requisitioned by the RAN in February 1942 and were fitted out as Armoured Stores Issuing Ships in Melbourne before heading to Sydney at the end of April 1942. The two ships operated primarily off the Australian east coast for the remainder of 1942 and most of 1943, making occasional voyages to New Caledonia and New Guinea.

By mid-1942, all four ships were being used by the RAN in some capacity, but *Ping Wo* was the only one that had been commissioned into the RAN at that time. After fitting out in Melbourne, *Ping Wo* departed for Sydney in June 1942. In September of that year, she continued on to Port Stephens to operate as a support vessel to the Combined Operations Training Centre, HMAS *Assault*. She was used primarily to transport water and other stores to the Landing Ships Infantry but was also used as a training ship. Some 20,000 Americans and 2,000 Australians received training in amphibious warfare at *Assault* over a two-year period. When the Centre was closed down in October 1943, *Ping Wo* was converted to a repair ship and redeployed to New Guinea.

Ping Wo remained in New Guinea throughout 1944, based mainly at Milne Bay, conducting the unglamorous but essential work of a repair vessel and fulfilling other duties as required. In January 1945 she returned to Melbourne to refit as a works ship to carry out naval construction work at ports where civilian labour was not available. She was underway again that July bound for Morotai in the Moluccas with a directive in force that neither the crew nor the ship's equipment was to be disintegrated in any way without the prior approval of the Australian Commonwealth Naval Board (ACNB). Such was the parlous state of naval bases in the Pacific that officers at Torokina and Rabaul made enquiries as to the availability of *Ping Wo* to assist in construction efforts there before the ship had even left Australian waters. As it happened, *Ping Wo* experienced engine difficulties and was delayed at Townsville, preventing her from reaching any of those destinations. She instead made for Madang in October 1945 where she once again acted a stores' issuing ship until February 1946, assisting in the repatriation of Allied servicemen and former prisoners of war. She then sailed for Hong Kong and duly arrived on the 8th of June 1946. The ship was formally decommissioned from the RAN

on the 24th of June 1946 and subsequently returned to her Chinese owners.

By the end of 1943, two more of the Chinese ships had commissioned into the RAN; *Whang Pu* on 1st October 1943 and *Poyang* on the 6th of December 1943. *Whang Pu* had been causing some consternation since her arrival in Fremantle as neither Australian nor British naval authorities could decide what to do with her. When she finally did commission into the RAN, the original intent was that she becomes a repair ship for the Fairmile motor launches based at Fremantle. However, and for whatever reason, this plan was abandoned, and she instead made her way to Melbourne for fitting out as a mobile repair ship. As with *Ping Wo* before her, *Whang Pu* found crossing the Bight most difficult, encountering gale force winds which forced her crew to work round-the-clock to keep her safely afloat. In April 1944, following her refit, she made her way north to New Guinea.

In July 1944, *Whang Pu* assisted in the construction of the base at Madang transporting equipment and stores as well as providing construction parties and assisting in the clearing and levelling of that part of the base allocated for the RAN. This proved to be a very busy period for *Whang Pu* as, not only did she provide construction parties, but continued operations as a repair ship and a stores' issuing ship. The crew's efforts in difficult conditions were commendable, particularly as they were struck by several ailments common to the tropics, including several cases of malaria. Their efforts were praised by the Naval Board who noted the less-than-ideal conditions that they were working in.



HMAS *Whang Pu*
Pic : Australian War Museum

On 6 July 1944 *Whang Pu* departed Milne Bay and headed to Madang, via Finschhafen, arriving there on the 9th July 1944. She was now utilised as a base works ship for the construction of the base facilities at Madang, as well as continuing to provide repair facilities for frigates, corvettes, and motor launches. Logistics and medical support continued with *Whang Pu* supporting over 2,000 RAN personnel ashore or in smaller vessels. In April-May 1945 *Whang Pu* was converted to a Naval Stores Issue Ship but remained the 'Jack Of All Trades' for maintenance and administrative support, a role she had by then been performing for some considerable time.

On the 10th of June 1945 *Whang Pu* departed Madang and headed westward to her final tasking at the island of Morotai, in the Netherlands East Indies (NEI)re. Morotai had been captured in September 1944 by US troops and was used as a forward air and naval base by Allied units. Australian forces were also based on the island in preparation for the landings on Borneo in 1945. Isolated parts of the island were still held by the Japanese forces, but they were contained and rarely seen.

Whang Pu arrived at Morotai on the 16th of June 1945 and was moored in the harbour and commenced work as a stores' issuing ship and floating workshop for smaller vessels – she was not to move from her berth for the next nine months. *Whang Pu* was at Morotai when the Japanese surrender was accepted there by General Thomas Blamey on the 9th of September 1945.

The ship suffered her only death on the 20th of June 1945 when Steward William Fisher died whilst returning from leave ashore; he tragically slipped when boarding the ship, struck his head and subsequently drowned. Steward Fisher was buried in the war cemetery at Morotai but was later re-interred at Ambon War Cemetery, Indonesia.

Whang Pu finally departed the island on the 16th of February 1946, with a steaming crew and stores personnel only on board. She sailed north, via Subic Bay, to Hong Kong where she arrived on the 26th of February 1946 where she was decommissioned from the RAN on 22 April 1946 and was handed over to the British Ministry of War Transport before being returned to her Chinese owners. All personnel remaining onboard at the time of the ship paying off, took passage aboard HMAS *Murchison* to return to Australia.

Whang Pu was sold in November 1949 and broken up.

Poyang, meanwhile, after commissioning in Sydney, departed for New Guinea, on New Years Day 1944. She operated off the north coast of New Guinea primarily supplying ammunition to Allied ships. She spent much time in convoy during the year and, as part of the Service Force Seventh Fleet - Leyte Gulf Unit, provided ammunition and other supplies to ships involved in the Leyte Gulf landings of October 1944, despite engine defects which had plagued the ship since construction. Additionally, coal shortages in New Guinea made it difficult for *Poyang* to maintain operations prompting the Deputy Chief of Naval Staff, Commander Gatacre, DSC, to question why the ship was sent to New Guinea in the first place.

Following a brief period back in Australian waters in December 1944 and January 1945, *Poyang* returned north and spent the remainder of the war in the New Guinea and Morotai areas and was in Morotai at the end of hostilities on 15th August 1945. She was one of twelve RAN ships which made up the naval force at Ambon when the 33rd Australian Infantry Brigade was landed to occupy the island. She remained in northern waters until the 7th of January 1946, when she then returned to Sydney and duly handed over to the Ministry of War Transport before being formally decommissioned from the RAN on the 6th of March 1946. She was August before being returned to her owners. After being de-stored she was decommissioned on 22 April 1946 and her remaining ships company returned to Australia in the frigate HMAS *Murchison*.

Yunnan was the last of the quartet to commission. Having been requisitioned and spending most of 1942 and 1943 in Australian waters, she proceeded to New Guinea in August 1943 to act as a stores' issuing ship and returned to Sydney in June 1944 to undergo a refit before conversion as an armament stores issuing vessel. All of these works were completed by September 1944 and under the command of Lieutenant Thomas Hehir (RANR) returned to New Guinea and arriving there at the end of October 1944, she joined HMAS *Poyang* in the Task Force Group 77.7 of the US Seventh Fleet. *Yunnan* also suffered from the coal shortages which had affected *Poyang* during this period.

Yunnan sailed for Leyte Gulf in December 1944 where she remained from 26 December 1944 through to early May 1945 supporting Allied ships involved in the Lingayen Gulf landings of January 1945. For the next three months she operated in waters around New Guinea, the Admiralty Islands, Morotai and the Sulu Archipelago. She returned to the Philippines after the cessation of hostilities before sailing for Sydney in October 1945 whereupon she was formally decommissioned from the RAN on the 31st of January 1946. She was handed over to the British Ministry of War Transport on 9 May 1946 before being returned to her owners.

The four Chinese coastal steamers are often viewed as something of a novelty; just four strange names consigned to the history books of the RAN. However, their contribution to Allied operations in New Guinea and the Philippines, and their assistance in the successful landings at Leyte and Lingayen should not be so readily dismissed. The ships respective crews worked long arduous hours under unfavourable and unpleasant conditions with remarkable camaraderie. Their service was, and remains, a credit to the RAN.



Earlier questions over future of Navy loom after HMNZS Manawanui sinking

Big and expensive questions over the future of the navy loom after the sinking of HMNZS Manawanui in Samoa. Defence Minister Judith Collins on Thursday (9th January) confirmed the response to the sinking, which occurred on Sunday (5th January), was going as well as possible. There had been minimal leakage of the roughly 950 tonnes of fuel held in the vessel, now lying 30 metres deep on the sea floor.



HMNZS Manawanui
Pic : RNZN

However, the cost of responding to the loss of the \$103 million, second-hand vessel remains to be determined. The Government was in negotiations with insurers over the cost of the recovery, but Finance Minister Nicola Willis declined to discuss this further on Thursday, saying this was “very commercially sensitive”. Minister Willis, speaking at the publishing of the Government’s financial statements, also confirmed the capability lost with the Manawanui would be replaced. “We do anticipate that we will need to replace capability in the future,” she said. “We’ve been doing some work behind the scenes to put together a defence capability plan that will phase those investments over future years. We are now going to have to adjust that plan to allow for the fact that there is a ship that has been lost. We will be integrating that into our thinking.” HMNZS Manawanui was operationally deployed to the South Pacific region when it sunk.

Before the Manawanui sinking, there was already a lot for the Government’s defence planners to consider as they produced the next defence capability plan, which will lay out billions in defence spending in the coming decades. This plan has since been delayed but is expected to be back before Cabinet by the end of this year (2025).

Of particular concern is the Royal New Zealand Navy (RNZN), which needs to possibly replace not only the Manawanui, but also in about a decade’s time its two frigates, cargo vessel HMNZS Canterbury, and two offshore patrol vessels (OPV’s Former Defence Minister Mr. Ron Mark, who led the purchase of the Manawanui, said the New Zealand Government must undertake to replace the sunken ship.

“The reason we spent that money is we had no littoral capability at all, we had no survey capability ... you have to have that capability,” he said. “If your role and your responsibilities as a defence force requires you to provide

humanitarian assistance and search and rescue across 11% of the planet’s surface, you have to have the capability, and you have to have a dive-salvage capability, you have to have a survey capability.” The Government had not intended to purchase the Manawanui in the first place at all.

In 2013, a year after the retirement of the hydrographic survey vessel Resolution and with the retirement of the prior 40-year-old dive support vessel (also called Manawanui) five years away, the Defence Force began looking for a “littoral operations support capability” to replace both ships.

The HMNZS Manawanui ran aground whilst surveying a reef south of Samoa late on the Saturday, followed by an onboard fire, then the crew evacuation with the eventual sinking on Sunday the (9th January).



HMNZS Manawanui – Hard Aground
Pic : RNZN

But when the cost of the years-long overhaul of the navy’s two 25-year-old frigates, HMNZS Te Mana and HMNZS Te Kaha, blew out, from \$446 million to more than \$630m, plans for building a new ship were put aside.

“We were scuppered in a way by the outstanding frigate systems upgrade which had languished for 10 years and gone nowhere ... I had to deal with that, and the only place I could take the money was out of the proposed purchase of a littoral vessel,” Mr Mark said. Instead, a cheaper option was sought. The 150 different ships on the market were considered, and what became the HMNZS Manawanui was acquired from Norwegian shipping firm Østensjø Rederi, and then modified, for \$NZ103m. Mr Mark said he would again purchase a second-hand commercial vessel to replace the lost HMNZS Manawanui.

“We don’t have it now, that’s it. So, we have to replace it, and if I could do that in 11 months, they can. They’re still building ships. The good thing is the crew all survived, and they’re there to crew another ship. There are ships available on international market. ... Go find one.”

Dr Peter Greener, a Victoria University expert in defence capability, agreed another HMNZS Manawanui was needed. “I’m not sure that we can draw any definite conclusions from the sinking of the HMNZS Manawanui until we know the reason why it sank ... whilst there has been speculation about it as a second-hand vessel, undoubtedly of its type, which was a North Sea oil and gas exploration ship, it was really quite a sophisticated ship,” he said.

"But it was to civilian specifications, in terms of bulkheads and the ability to stay afloat; it wasn't a warship."

Mr Greener said he had been pushing for the Navy to have a greater compatibility of systems and hulls, as currently the Navy has six different types of vessels across its nine ships. This meant the burden of training staff to operate the different vessels was unsustainable for a small Navy. "The fact that we have had three ships tied up at the wharf for a considerable period of time tells us that manning, particularly in terms of critical trades in the Navy, has been in a parlous state," he said.

He said it was necessary to still have combat-capable warships, so the Navy could buy five of the same hulls and fit them out for different jobs: one as a survey ship, one a frigate, and two as offshore patrol vessels. There was also a debate to be had about the use of uncrewed and autonomous technology in place of armaments on a frigate, he said.



HMNZS Manawanui – Just After Fire Broke Out
Pic : RNZN

Dr Del Carlini, a military strategy expert said defence planners needed to be thinking about "agility and adaptability".

"We've been living in a false peacetime paradigm that we can take years, years, to go through a long bureaucratic process to decide what equipment we should be buying, and what warfare shows us is that actually that time doesn't exist. "You can't adapt if you've sunk all of your funds into buying, let's say frigates, significant spends when you suddenly find you don't need frigates, or that frigates are restricting for you." He pointed to the example of the Ukraine war, where drones have dominated and sunk the Russian navy's vessels in the Black Sea. He said New Zealand should invest in manufacturing capability to make drones.

"What if we didn't have any large surface ships? What if we had a thousand sea drones? What if we had more than that, the capability to manufacture a thousand sea drones of whatever the technology of the moment requires?"

The ASX-listed shipbuilder announced that it has been awarded a contract extension for the development of two additional Evolved Cape Class patrol boats for the Australian Border Force. The order brings the total number of Evolved Cape Class patrol boats scheduled for delivery to the Commonwealth by Austal to 12, though this order marks the first two capabilities ordered for the Australian Border Force. The capabilities are expected to protect Australia's

borders, supporting the Maritime Border Command and Operation Sovereign Borders.

"The eight Evolved Capes delivered by Austal since 2020, operating with the Royal Australian Navy, are making a significant contribution to our maritime and border security. These additional vessels for the Australian Border Force will further enhance the capability for maritime surveillance and border patrols throughout Northern Australia," Austal CEO Paddy Gregg said.

"Austal previously delivered eight, original Cape Class patrol boat fleets to the Australian Border Force from 2012 to 2015; it's a testament to the vessel's capability and our team's shipbuilding expertise that we're now tasked with constructing two Evolved Capes for the ABF; their first Evolved Capes, to enhance their existing capabilities for this important mission."



HMNZS Manawanui – Final resting Place
Pic : NZDF

New Zealand Does Not Plan to Replace Lost Survey Ship Manawanui

When the survey ship *Manawanui* went down off the coast of Samoa in October 2024, New Zealand's small navy lost more than a tenth of its fleet. **The vessel will not be replaced, New Zealand's defence minister said early this week**, and her missions will be picked up by the patrol boat HMNZS *Otago* - a much smaller vessel lacking *Manawanui*'s working deck and 100-tonne crane.

It is as yet unclear whether *Manawanui*'s wreck will be raised, but refuelling operations to reduce the risk of pollution are under way. The salvor is using a deck barge carrying tanktainers to store extracted petroleum from the ship, and it recently made its first planned trip back to port to drop off the first set of full tanks. The port backloaded empties onto the barge, and the salvors towed it back out towards the site to continue work. The barge's spread-moor system will remain in place between trips to and from the port, with its mooring cables temporarily hung on buoys so that they can be picked up later.

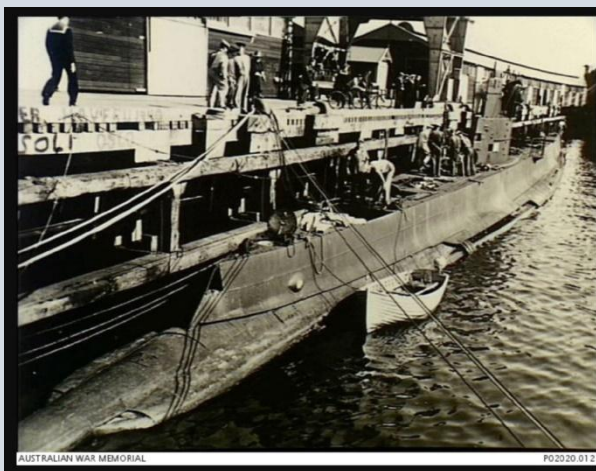
Despite some early delays due to weather, the "complex and technical" defueling project is proceeding well, NZDF on-scene commander Commodore Andrew Brown said in a statement. He noted that the government of Samoa has reduced the scope of its precautionary restrictions on fishing in areas around the wreck site, which were implemented due to the risk of pollution from *Manawanui*'s diesel fuel. Brown said that with New Zealand's help with water quality testing, further reductions are expected soon.

An exclusion area of about 2,000 meters around the wreck will remain in effect.

The cost of cleanup will be steep, but part of it will be covered by the New Zealand Defence Force's insurers, minister of defence Judith Collins told 1News. "Obviously Defence Force is supplying a lot of staff, a lot of equipment, all these things happening, but a lot of that is working with insurers," she said, declining to put a figure on the exact costs.

Wreck of Dutch submarine in Rottneest Ships' Graveyard identified as HNLMS K XI

The Western Australian Museum has identified the wreck of a scuttled Dutch submarine in Rottneest Ships' Graveyard to be that of HNLMS *K XI* (*K 11*), a World War II Royal Netherlands Navy colonial class patrol submarine.



HNLMS K XI – Under Maintenance Fremantle 1945
Pic : Australian War Museum

Head of Maritime Heritage at the WA Museum, Ms Corioli Souter, said the Museum has been investigating the Rottneest Ships' Graveyard since the 1990s, that the *K XI* is one of the most significant of over 50 watercraft recorded to have been discarded in the Graveyard, and is important to mutual Dutch-Australian heritage values and to the State's underwater cultural heritage.

"For more than three decades, the Museum has been fortunate to collaborate with a diverse range of organisations and people to investigate the Graveyard.

"We knew the wreck was out there, and we are delighted to have collaborated with technical divers from Wrecksploration, along with their partners, who finally found the wreck," Corioli said. "Over the decades, the use of archival sources, local knowledge, and remote sensing surveys has allowed the Museum to identify a number of significant sites in the Graveyard. In this project, we compared archival records with the 3D model created by Wrecksploration to confirm that the wreck was the *K XI*," Corioli said.

The Museum has a long-standing relationship with the Cultural Heritage Agency of the Netherlands (RCE) who, through their International Programme for Maritime Heritage, financed the photogrammetry work conducted by

Wrecksploration. The photogrammetry work was developed into a 3D model of the wreck and submitted to the WA Museum for identification.

Dr Martijn Manders of the RCE told broadcaster NOS "It is the best result we could have hoped for. The discovery of the submarine not only shows the ties between the Netherlands and Australia, but also how close we are when it comes to the management of our maritime cultural heritage".

Ship History

HNLMS *K XI* was the first of three *K XI*-class submarines (the 'K' stood for 'Koloniën') of the Royal Netherlands Navy, built to serve as long-range patrol vessels in the Dutch colonies. *K XI* was laid down on the 9th December 1922 and commissioned into service on the 24th March, 1925.

K XI was built by the Fijenoord shipyard at Rotterdam. Before departing for the Dutch East Indies she sailed on an exhibition tour to the Baltic Sea along with the submarine *O 8*, the pantserschip (coastal defence ship) Marten Harpertzoon Tromp and Jacob Van Heemskerck, and the torpedo boats *Z 3* and *Z 5*. During the tour the ships visited ports in Lithuania, Latvia, Estonia and Finland.

Technical specifications of K XI class submarines ('K XI-class submarine')

Dimensions : 66.7m length, 6.15m width, 3.78m draught

Displacement : 688 tons surfaced; 828 tons submerged

Propulsion : Two 1,200 bhp M.A.N. diesel engines and two 327 bhp electric motors

Range : 6,500km at 8 knots on the surface, or 46km at 8 knots submerged

Max. Speed : 17 knots surfaced; 8 knots submerged

Armament : 6 x torpedo tubes (2 x 21 inch bow tubes, 2 x 17.7 inch bow tubes, 2 x 17.7 inch stern tubes)

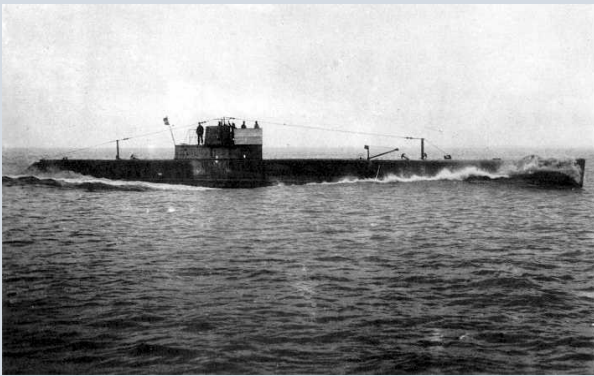
1 x 88m Bofors gun

1 x 12.7mm machine gun

Crew : 31

Finally, on 15 October 1925, *K XI*, under the command of First Lieutenant G.E.V.L. Beckman, departed for the Dutch East Indies. During the first part of the voyage to Tunis, Prof. Dr. F.A. Vening Meinesz was on board in order to conduct gravity measurements. On 28 December 1925 *K XI* arrived in Sabang.

K XI remained on station and operational throughout the Dutch East Indies between January 1926 through to December 1941 when the Netherlands, some seven hours after the Japanese raid on Pearl Harbour, also declared war on Japan.



K XI – On Patrol – Dutch East Indies – Circa 1927
Pic : Australian War Museum

World War II

From the German attack on the Netherlands in 1940 until the moment Japan declared war, *K XI* operated out of Surabaya. In early 1941 *K XI* was part of the 2nd Division of the Dutch East Indies Submarine Flotilla, with *K X*, *K XII* and *K XIII*. From 8 December 1941 to 23 January 1942, whilst based in Colombo, *K XI* fell under British operational command and conducted patrols east of Malaya. The ship was used as a target ship by the Royal Navy and the Royal Indian Navy for anti-submarine warfare and ASDIC exercises.

From 23rd January 1942 until the fall of Dutch East Indies in March 1942 *K XI* was in maintenance in Surabaya due to engine damage, after which the submarine conducted only one patrol west of Sumatra. Because of the fall of the Dutch East Indies, *K XI* fled to Colombo, arriving on or about the 17th March 1942. Then *K XI* was used to patrol waters in the Indian Ocean, moving between India and Pakistan based under British Eastern Fleet control between March 1942 and February 1945, following the Japanese invasion of Singapore.

At the request of the Royal Navy *K XI* was then transferred to Fremantle, in Western Australia, departing Bombay on the 20th of February 1945, arriving approximately a Month later on the 22nd of March and was then decommissioned on the 11th April 1945.

Rescue of HMAS *Yarra* survivors

On the 27th of February 1942, the RAN sloop HMAS *Yarra*, which formed part of an escort to a convoy, was on its way from Batavia to Tjilitap on the south coast of Java, however, as fate would have it, the port fell to the Japanese before they arrived. With that, three vessels, the depot ship Anking, an oil tanker and a minesweeper were diverted from Java under the care of HMAS *Yarra*. Their destination was Australia, and it was to be a race for survival.

On March 3rd, HMAS *Yarra* stopped to pick up 40 survivors from a sunken Dutch ship. One day later, when 375 miles south of Java, the lookout sighted a number of warships on the horizon, which appeared to be sailing north, directly towards the convoy. High explosive shells from three eight-inch Japanese cruisers along with four destroyers five inch armament, soon showed the ships were enemy and intent on sinking the small convoy.

After laying a thick smoke screen over her charges, HMAS *Yarra* bravely turned to make contact with the attackers at their centre. Her four inch guns and a few three pounders had very little chance of delaying the enemy, but she sped

ahead. Ninety shells exploded around her before the first hit killed almost all personnel in the ships sick bay. Keeping out of range of *Yarra's* guns, the Japanese scored another direct hit on the bridge, followed with a further two more hits on the guns and the engine room. Lieutenant Commander Rankin, the ships Commanding Officer, ordered 'Abandon Ship'. His ship now lay dead and helpless in the water, on fire from stem to stern and rapidly flooding. The Captain went to his cabin to destroy confidential papers and was never seen again.

HMAS *Yarra* was of a stubborn breed and refused to die. The Japanese heavy calibre guns pounded her torn hull with their superior firepower, but she refused to sink. Dive bombers were called in and eventually she rolled over and slipped beneath the waves. Out of her complement of 151 officers and ratings, only 33 crew survived the battle to get away on two Carley floats, two rafts and a length of planking. For more than four days, the exhausted, injured and weary survivors drifted, being gradually reduced in numbers to thirteen as privation and marauding sharks took their toll. These exposed and shattered crew were eventually rescued by an extraordinary turn of luck.

The Dutch submarine, *K XI*, was fleeing the Japanese advance and had left Surabaya for Colombo, dodging the relentless pursuit of Japanese warships and aircraft. Only once did the captain dare to bring the submarine up to the surface during daylight hours, in order to recharge the ships batteries. It was only then by providence; the submarine's Captain sighted the 13 survivors of HMAS *Yarra* on the 8th March. These lucky thirteen shattered sailors were then safely delivered to Colombo.



Submarine Base At Fremantle – WWII
Pic : Australian War Museum

Fate

K XI arrived in Fremantle in the early weeks of April 1945 where it came under U.S. operational command but being obsolete her crew were transferred to other operational submarines. During World War II, Fremantle Harbour was the largest submarine base in the Southern Hemisphere and was the second-most important Allied submarine base in the Indo Pacific Theatre after Pearl Harbour, with US, British and Dutch submarines operating from Fremantle. When fully active, Fremantle saw 170 American, British and Dutch submarines pass through the harbour conducting a total of

416 war patrols. Eleven Dutch submarines operated out of Fremantle during this time.

Between the 10th and 12th April 1945, *K XI* was officially decommissioned and was then towed to HMAS Leeuwin III (Royal Freshwater Bay Yacht Club) where she was partially stripped, and the deck gun was donated as a memento to the Yacht Club.

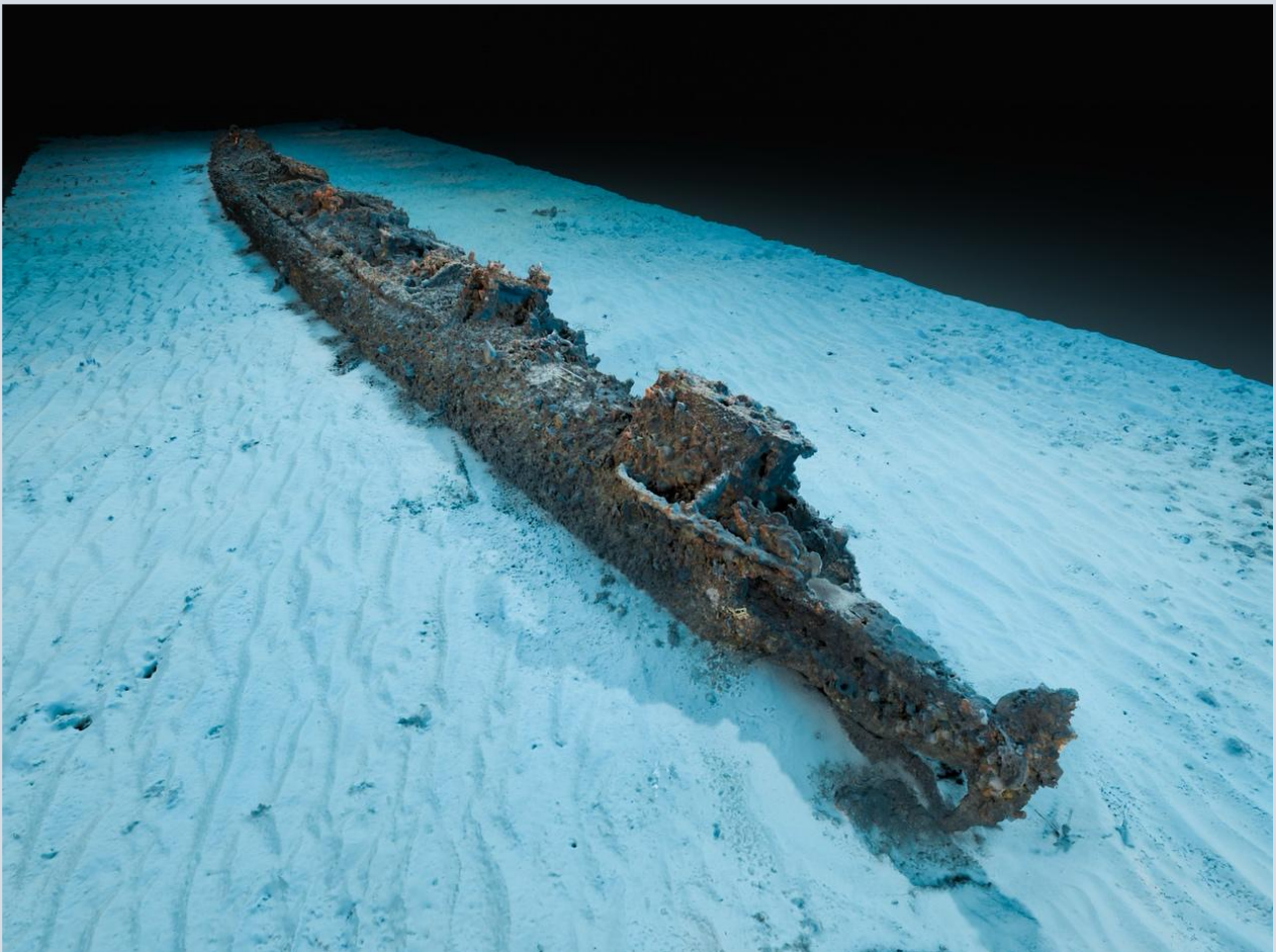
K XI was subsequently handed over to the Royal Australian Navy (RAN) in Fremantle for transmission to the Australian Disposal Committee. The submarine was then towed down river to the North Quay and placed onto the slipway to undergo further stripping. After returning to the water, the submarine unfortunately sank after a depth gauge was left off the hull whilst on the slipway.

The submarine was salvaged some six weeks later and then *K XI* was stripped even further before being towed out to the "Ships Graveyard" site west of Rottnest Island and scuttled in September 1946.

K XI was intended to be scuttled at the designated Rottnest Island ship disposal area in 1946, but the location it was discovered in on New Year's Day 2025 is 7.8 nm South of Garden Island (Wadjemup) and 8.2 nm from the northern tip of Garden Island at a depth of around 40 meters, about 7 km east of the designated Rottnest Ships' Graveyard scuttling ground

The discovery was announced on the 80th anniversary of its final voyage, the date it departed the Sri Lankan capital Colombo on February 20th 1945, for the Australian port of Fremantle, where it was eventually decommissioned.

It is still not known why the wreck was not disposed of in the Rottnest Ships' Graveyard as originally intended. A possible explanation is that the submarine's hull suffered from flooding before it reached the Graveyard, and it had to be prematurely abandoned.



***K XI – Final Resting Place Deepwater Graveyard Site 45
Pic : Western Australian Museum***

Discovery and legal protection of the wreck

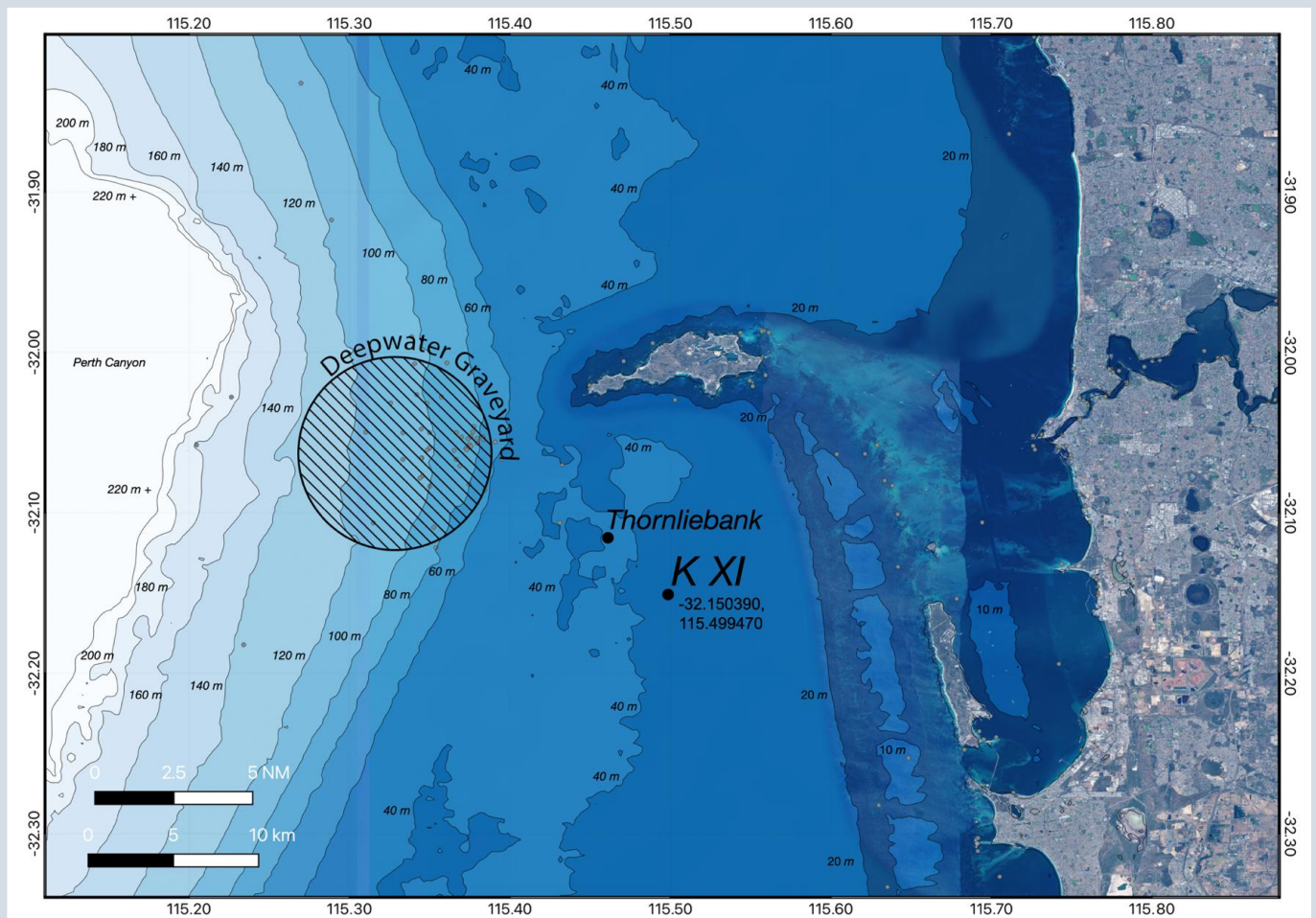
Because the wreck of *K XI* is more than 75 years old and in Australian waters, it is automatically protected by the Commonwealth's *Underwater Cultural Heritage Act 2018* which is supported by the *Commonwealth Underwater Cultural Heritage Program* delivered by *Department of Climate Change Energy Environment and Water (DCCEEW)*.

Divers with appropriate certification can visit the site, but must remember it is a protected site and is an offence to damage, disturb, or remove any part of the wreck. Substantial fines and/or imprisonment can be bestowed to offenders for non-compliance of the Cultural Heritage Programme.

Acknowledgements

The Western Australian Museum has since worked on identifying the wreck by comparing archive data with a 3D model of the wreck made by the divers. *K XI* was found south of Rottnest Island Western Australia by **Andrew Oakeley, David Jackson and Patrick Morrison** on the 1st of January 2025, using magnetic data supplied by Alasdair Cooke of the Maritime Discovery Group.

It was recorded using photogrammetry by **Wrecksplosion** on the 11th of January 2025, with the **Western Australian Museum** confirming its identity.



Location of *K XI* Off Rottnest Island – Located In 40 m Of Water
Pic : Western Australian Museum



***Dutch Submarines In Fremantle Harbour During WWII
Pic : Western Australian Museum***

Sail Training Ship *Leeuwin* (STS)



STS Leeuwin Under Full Sail & Full Glory
Pic : Teledyne Marine

Australia's Sail Training Ship (STS) *Leeuwin* is a well-known vessel employed in the seafaring training category and is a three-masted barquentine named after the Dutch galleon *Leeuwin* which mapped the south-west coast of Australia in 1622.

The *Leeuwin* is operated by **Leeuwin Ocean Adventure Foundation**, a non-profit organisation that runs youth training voyages in journeys around the Australian coastline.

On 30 August 2024, the 141,076 ton displacement container ship *Maersk Shekou*, while entering the harbour at the Port of Fremantle, collided with the moored *Leeuwin*. The collision brought down the ship's masts and injured two people on watch aboard *Leeuwin* at the time.

Following the tragic incident, the Australian Transport Safety Bureau (ATSB) commenced a thorough investigation as to the cause of the incident and a copy of the investigation was released on the 17th April, 2025.

In the following days after the incident, several false and uncorroborated media announcements stated (incorrectly) that due to the significant damage inflicted to the *Leeuwin*, the vessel was going to be scrapped.

Despite all of the three masts, along with all of the rigging, were broken and brought down, the ship remained structurally sound

Fast forward to October 2024 and after a mammoth clean up in removing damaged masts, rigging and other destroyed deck gear and some good old "elbow grease", the *Leeuwin* was readied to undertake a "shakedown" sea trial to prove the ship systems.

following the incident. Fortunately, the hull itself may not have suffered major damage.

And so, on Monday 19th May, 2025, accompanied by a tug, the *Leeuwin* slipped her berth at Fremantle Port and under her own power sailed down into Cockburn Sound to the Henderson Marine Complex where she was placed into the shiplift and raised out of the water to commence her refit and repairs.

The intention, all going to plan, is to have the vessel back into the water in preparation for the Summer sailing season starting in approximately December 2025.

In discussions with the insurers, the total cost of damage and repairs are yet to be determined, however, as we all know, I don't think we will be getting too much change back out of a million dollars !

To read the full ATSB investigation report click on the link :

https://www.atsb.gov.au/publications/investigation_reports/2025/report/mo-2024-001



***STS Leeuwin After Being Impacted In Fremantle Port By Container Ship In 2024
Pic : Channel 9 News***



***STS LEEUWIN On The Shiplift At Henderson Marine Facility
Pic : Unknown/Credit Minderoo Foundation***



***STS LEEUWIN On The Shiplift At Henderson Marine Facility
Pic : Unknown/Credit Minderoo Foundation***

Two dead and multiple injured after Mexican Navy ship crashes into New York's Brooklyn Bridge

Two Mexican Naval seamen have died, along with 22 of their shipmates' incurring casualties after the Mexican Naval Ship, **ARM Cuauhtemoc** impacted the Brooklyn Bridge during the ship's promotional tour into New York City on Saturday evening, 17th May, 2025.

The Mexican Navy said earlier that the **Cuauhtémoc**, which is an academy training vessel with a crew of 277, was damaged in the accident in the East River, preventing the continuation of the training cruise for the time being. The ship was scheduled to visit 22 ports in 15 nations, including Kingston, Jamaica, Havana, Cuba, Cozumel, Mexico and New York. It had also planned to go to Reykjavik, Iceland, Bordeaux, Saint Malo and Dunkirk, France and Aberdeen in Scotland for a total of 254 days — 170 at sea and 84 in port.

During the sailing manoeuvre of the **Cuauhtémoc** on the East River, in New York, a severe mishap occurred with the Brooklyn Bridge, causing critical damage to the training ship. New York

police said the ship lost power as it left the harbour for Iceland, and was sucked toward the bridge by the current. The ship, at 157ft tall (48m), was unable to fit under the clearance of the Brooklyn Bridge, at 134.5ft (41m). A member of the National Transportation Safety Board (NTSB) was unclear as to how police discerned the ship lost power, but said there were no structural integrity concerns related to the Brooklyn Bridge itself.

Onlookers reported seeing crewmembers hanging from the ship's masts and beams while awaiting rescue.

Following investigation of the incident, the Mexican Navy stated the pilot navigating the training ship **Cuauhtémoc** during its Saturday night crash into the Brooklyn Bridge was New York-based. "The ship must be controlled by a specialized harbour pilot from the New York government," Admiral Raymundo Pedro Morales Ángeles said at a press conference.

Morales Ángeles acknowledged there was not much time for the pilot to react to the situation, possibly as little as 80 to 90 seconds.



***ARM Cuauhtemoc Drifting Out Of Control Stern First Towards The Brooklyn Bridge
Pic : Compliments of Nelson Slinkard/X***



***ARM Cuauhtemoc Under Tow Recovery From The Brooklyn Bridge
Pic : Compliments of Nelson Slinkard/X***



***ARM Cuauhtemoc Under Tow Recovery From The Brooklyn Bridge
Pic : Compliments of Nelson Slinkard/X***

One shot, one kill. EOS introduces Slinger counter-drone system

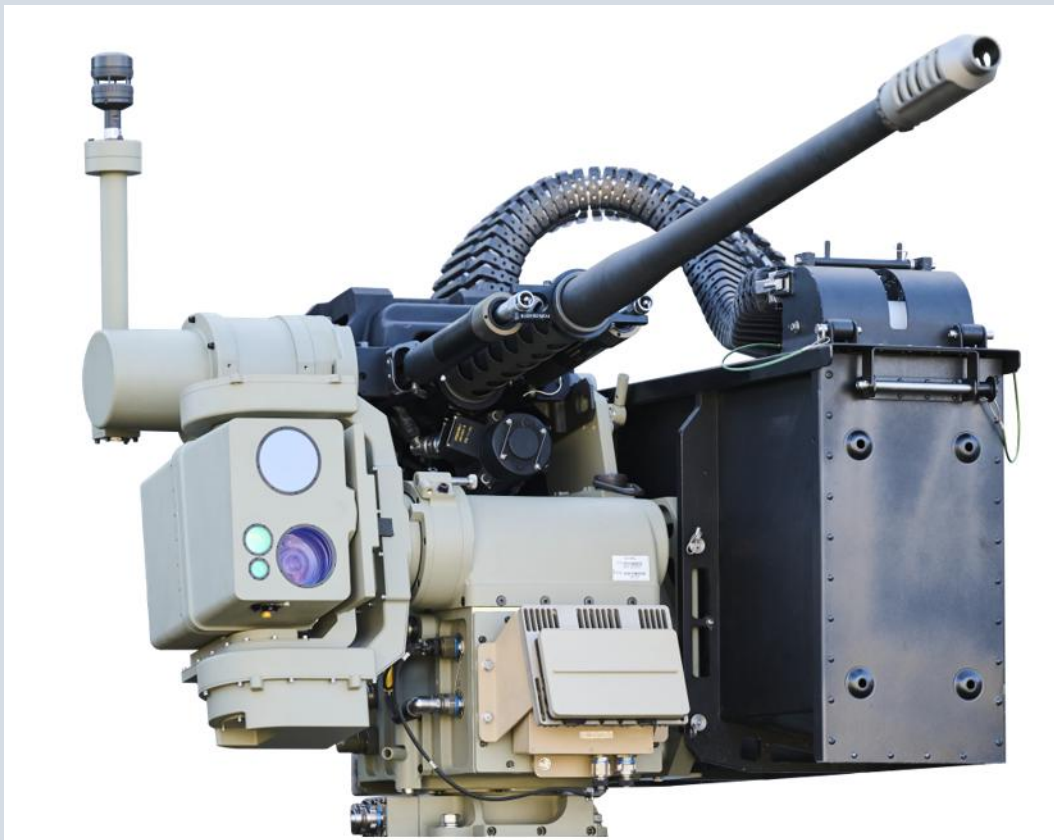
Electro Optic Systems (EOS) has launched its Australian-made counter-drone capability, named the Slinger. The Slinger is an anti-drone weapon system developed by Electro Optic Systems (EOS) of Symonston, Australia and was introduced onto the market in May 2023

The Slinger is a cutting-edge capability that demonstrates Australian innovation can lead the world in a response to global security needs”, said Matt Jones, Executive Vice President of EOS Defence Systems.

The Slinger incorporates a radar, a 30mm cannon with specifically designed ammunition, and EOS’ proprietary stabilisation and pointing technology for counter-drone operations.

It can track and discriminately engage moving drones at a range of more than 800 metres, with unique ammunition making it suitable for use in built-up environments.

The Slinger has been designed and developed in Australia specifically for export markets, with a focus on addressing contemporary and emerging threats based on lessons learned in recent conflicts, such as Ukraine.



*Slinger R800 – Drone Killer
Pic : EOS, Defence Industry Europe*

The unit itself consists of:

- a remote controlled weapon station (RCWS) based on the EOS model **R800 RCWS** that uses a lightweight **Bushmaster M230LF 30mm** autocannon which is fully stabilised and capable of on-the-move operation. 150 radio frequency proximity fused, high explosive/fragmentation 30 mm rounds are carried. Rate of fire is selectable at single-shot, 100 rpm, or 200 rpm.
- a secondary **MAG 58 7.62mm** coaxial machine gun.
- an Echodyne EchoGuard 4D multi mission surveillance radar is integrated into the system providing detection ranges of more than 3.5 km for vehicles and more than 2.2 km for individuals, while small drones can be detected out to 1.4 km and engaged at beyond 800 m
- the sensor unit, which includes a day camera and thermal imager that can identify objects at distances of 12 km and 13.7 km, respectively.

The turret system weighs 355 kg and has a height of 90 cm, so it can be mounted on the roofs of vehicles or even the flatbed of a pickup truck. It can elevate the guns up to +70° and depress them down to -10°. An operator controls the turret using a joystick from inside the vehicle; it is capable of remotely tracking a target on its own for the controller to engage.



***Slinger System Roof Mounted On 4 x 4 Vehicle
Pic : EOS, Defence Industry Europe***

The Slinger is designed for low-cost counter-drone interception. Compared to traditional missiles which would cost hundreds of thousands of dollars being used against drones costing in the low tens of thousands or less, Slinger has a cost per engagement ranging from \$155.00 to \$1,550.00; with the unit cost is less than \$1.55 million.

In September 2023, it was announced that 160 Slingers would be provided to Ukraine by EOS for use in that country's defence during the ongoing invasion by Russia. 110 will be mounted on M113 armoured personnel carriers and 50 will be integrated onto the British Practika 4x4 light Mine Resistant Ambush Protected Vehicle (MRAP).



***Slinger – One Shot - One Kill
Pic : EOS Defence Industry Europe***

SPECIFICATIONS	BASELINE SYSTEM	OPTIONS
Primary armament	Bushmaster™ Mk44S/XM813 30 mm × 173 mm cannon	Bushmaster™ M230LF 30 mm × 113 mm cannon Other medium-calibre cannons can be integrated
Secondary armament	MAG58 7.62 mm machine gun	Mk52 7.62 mm Bushmaster chain gun M2 .50cal machine gun M134 7.62 mm Minigun Up to 1kW laser dazzler
Missile	1 × Javelin™ or 2 × SPIKE™ (pod)	4 × Javelin™ (2 × pods either side) 4 × SPIKE™ (2 × pods either side) 4 × TOW™ (2 × pods either side) 2 × 2.75 TALON Rocket pods 2 × Stinger™ pods
Ammunition load (30 mm)	200 rds. (2 × containers), dual feed	300 rds (2 × containers), dual feed. Airburst available
Ammunition load (7.62 mm)	1000 rds.	2000 rds
Sensor Unit	Continuous zoom day camera Continuous zoom thermal camera Eye-safe Class 1 laser rangefinder	Commander's independent panoramic sensor unit SWIR sensor Multiband sensor fusion Next generation cognitive radar
Ballistic protection	Basic add-on armour kit: STANAG Level 2 to sensor units, ammunition and electronics	
Elevation range	+60 degrees–10 degrees	
Height	40.16 inches / 1020 mm (to top of feed chute window)	
Length (base)	56.5 inches / 1435 mm	
Length (overall)	134.75 inches / 3423 mm	
Width (base)	64.73 inches / 1644 mm	
Width (overall)	70 inches / 1778 mm (not including missiles or other side attachments)	
Weight (no armour)	1,267 kg (includes weapons and an ammunition load of 200 × 30 mm rds plus 1000 × 7.62 mm rds)	

Is It Worth A Thought

Although the Slinger system was developed primarily with being a “land based” attack/defence weapon for the Army/Marine ground forces, there is the concept that it possibly could be developed into a shipboard defence system.

The role that Slinger could be utilised in best, would be as a support weapon to the main armament on the Arafura Class OPV and both the Armidale Class and Evolved Cape Class Patrol Boats.

Additionally, there should be no ignoring the possibility the Slinger system could also be mounted onboard major units of the R.A.N. Fleet, especially such units as the LHD's, LSD, Tankers and not forgetting the Survey and Minesweeping vessels.

Given that the weapon system is primarily designed for anti-drone defence measures, the application of using specialist style ammunition, namely a lightweight 30 mm Proximity Sensing Ammunition (PSA) with radio frequency proximity-fused, high explosive, fragmentation round, would make it ideal to operate from minor war vessels (OPV's and the like).

Coupled with other types of already designated ammunition in use with existing fleet units, will make the Slinger system a definite adversary.

Finally, and not forgetting, the Slinger system is reportedly far cheaper to purchase, operate and maintain than other weapons of the same calibre, which would really make it worth consideration, not only by the manufacturer, but by the RAN too.