

CN SPEECH

Geraldton (Sunset Ceremony)

19 Nov 08

On this day, at this time 67 years ago, 645 men gave their lives for a greater cause. In doing so they came to symbolise all that we who wear this uniform cherish.

Honour, Honesty, Courage, Integrity and Loyalty. These are the values which we in Navy live by.

Honour

Sydney II will forever hold a very honourable place in our naval and national history. We honour *Sydney* and hold her and her Ships Company in the highest esteem. *Sydney II* served our nation with distinction. To honour her is to pay tribute to a remarkable act by ordinary men, thrust into a horrifying ordeal.

Honesty & Integrity

While we may never know exactly what happened on that fateful day, eye witness accounts from the survivors of the German raider *Kormoran* make it clear *Sydney II* approached their vessel in accordance with the rules of war. The current Commission of Inquiry into the sinking will make the final judgement on this. But while the crew of *Sydney II* may well have been surprised that day – they engaged the *Kormoran* with their heads held high. Integrity is a measurement of personal honour. In the chaos and confusion which must have engulfed them at the end, history judges those on board *Sydney II* to have acted with self discipline and as a team.

Courage

To say they acted courageously may be to state the obvious but in combat, courage can never be taken for granted. We can only imagine the fear, the shock and the anger *Sydney's* Ships Company may have felt as the *Kormoran's* first rounds slammed into their hull. But we do know that *Sydney* fought back and continued to do so for some time. Those of us who wear our nation's uniform can only hope that we too may find such courage, should we be called upon to defend our nation in the same fashion.

Loyalty

The final Navy value is loyalty. Loyalty to our nation, loyalty to our mates and loyalty to those we leave behind. It applies as much to the Sydney II's crew as it does to their families. The hundreds of Australians whose sons, fathers, husbands and partners never came home remained loyal to memories which will never fade. Loyalty is why we are here on this day.

Conclusion

Today is about the past as much as it is about the future. The debt we owe the Ships Company of *Sydney II* is one which we can never repay. It is my hope that the commemoration today will symbolise to all, the values I have spoken of. It will remind those of us in uniform of the code we must follow...and speak to future generations of a time long ago, when sailors paid a tragic price for the values they too held dear.