



# HMAS Albatross

## *Celebrating 65 years*

### Nowra to host HMAS Albatross Freedom of Entry march



PERSONNEL from HMAS Albatross will celebrate the Royal Australian Navy base's 65th anniversary of operations in the Shoalhaven with a Freedom of Entry march.

Some 1000 sailors and officers will march through Nowra with swords drawn, bayonets fixed, drums beating, band playing and colours flying.

The Freedom of Entry to the city of Shoalhaven will be held on Saturday, August 31 from 9.50am.

The parade will form up at Nowra Showground and proceed along Junction Street to Rauch Park where the challenge will take place.

The tradition of Freedom of Entry and challenge dates back to medieval times when armed bodies were rarely admitted into other cities.

This honour is now conferred in recognition of trust and friendship between citizens and military personnel.

Accompanied by the Royal Australian Navy Band the parade will proceed along Junction Street where Albatross Commanding Officer, Captain Gordon Andrew, will be symbolically challenged by Shoalhaven Local Area Commander, Superintendent Joe Cassar with the words "Halt, who goes there?"

The parade marks both Albatross's anniversary and the strong bond the naval establishment has with the Shoalhaven community.

It's a ceremony many generations of Shoalhaven families have shared and enjoyed since HMAS Albatross was first commissioned 65 years ago.

The parade will include a helicopter flypast from Navy's Fleet Air Arm.



Scenes from the 1979 Freedom of Entry parade in Nowra.

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### Defence Families

Nowra Anglican College is located in an area that is home to several Defence Force establishments, bringing with them Defence personnel and their families and a unique set of needs. Nowra Anglican College seeks to support service families as they join our community, to help them settle in and, when the time comes, to help them make the necessary adjustments prior to taking up new postings elsewhere in Australia and internationally.

Nowra Anglican College is a Christian school in the Anglican tradition. As such we seek to support all children within our College community and recognise their particular needs. Help is at hand to ensure a smooth transition to and from the College, to assist with the integration of new students and their families on their arrival at the College and to help them become familiar with the wider community.

The College has in place a Defence Transition Team to help with Australian Defence Force (ADF) students and their families. The Defence School Transition Aide (DSTA) in the Junior School (K - 6) and the Defence Transition Mentor (DTM) in the Senior School (Years 7 - 12) are funded by the Defence Community Organisation (DCO) under the umbrella of the ADF. In addition to providing guidance during transitions into and out of the College the Defence Transition Team provides support for children of ADF members and their families during parental absences due to deployment, exercises or courses.

Along with individual assessment, ongoing monitoring and group activities the DSTA and DTM provide mentoring, advocacy and care for the children of our Defence Force families.



Contact Melissa Jobson on 02 4421 7711

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*Celebrating 65 years*

## A fitting tribute

By ROBERT CRAWFORD

FOR the Commanding Officer of HMAS Albatross, Captain Gordon Andrew, his first Freedom of Entry march in the Shoalhaven on August 31 will have special meaning.

It will be one of Captain Andrew's final official duties before posting out to Canberra after two years at the base at the end of the year.

He said he was looking forward to this symbolic and special occasion.

"For navy the Freedom of Entry march it is very important," Captain Andrew said.

"It is an important link with our local community.

"The navy is a service based on traditions and customs and the Freedom of Entry march is one of those traditions and customs that relates to the local community.

"For the navy they are really important, even though they may seem just symbolic.

"Realistically, marching with swords drawn, drums beating and colours flying is probably nonsense in today's day and age, but it is a symbol to Shoalhaven City Council that allows us to operate within the city and that can't be underplayed.

"It also symbolises the role we play within the community as well as the communities' support it gives us to allow us to go about our business."

He said the march was the starting point of a particularly busy period



• **Captain Gordon Andrew**

locally for the navy, with HMAS Albatross celebrating its 65th anniversary and the International Fleet review activities in Jervis Bay, before the whole celebration moves to Sydney Harbour.

That will be followed by divisions later in the year, which Captain Andrew said was always spectacular and will be his last official duty before he posts out at the end of the year to Canberra.

"I have never worked in an area that has such a connection with a military base as there is in Nowra," he said.

"The base has been here for 65 years and a number of former personnel have retired here becoming part of the community.

"There is a local connection across every facet and demographic in the Shoalhaven and that is something that makes this area a unique relationship.

"Certainly something I have not seen in any other places I have served before."

Captain Andrew said he will be sad to post out at the end of the year.

"The past two years are really just a blur," he said.

"It has flown by and been such a wonderful time. It has just gone so quickly.

"I have been privileged to have been part of HMAS Albatross at such an exciting time.

"We have new helicopters coming, new buildings being built, and the new helicopter training school coming on line. The base is really going ahead and I have been extremely lucky to be part of that.

"And I couldn't think of a better way to finish my time at Albatross than with a Freedom of Entry march and the International Fleet review coming to Jervis Bay."

He will be replaced by an Albatross aviator with a lot of experience, Captain Simon Bateman.

"Simon is a great guy, he and his family already live within the community."

The last Freedom of Entry march in the Shoalhaven was in 2008 to mark the 60th anniversary of the naval base.

"It's not something we do all the time; I think if we did it would lose its symbolism. But it is definitely fitting to have the ceremony on appropriate and significant occasions," Captain Andrew said.



**HMAS Choules' embarked MRH-90 aircraft, Posiedon-14, conducting helicopter in-flight refuelling training operations, during a sortie, off the flight deck off the coast of South Queensland.**

## Commissioning a part of history

A CHAPTER in the history of HMAS Albatross was written with the commissioning of the newly formed 808 Squadron on Thursday, July 11 this year.

808 Squadron will be the home of the Australian Defence Force's new MRH-90 multi-role helicopter.

The commissioning ceremony was staged at the 808 Squadron building and brought new, improved capabilities and capacity to meet emerging future requirements.

The traditional naval commissioning ceremony marked the formal induction of the squadron and aircraft into the fleet and came after a period of extensive training, trials and preparation, which ensure the squadron's aircraft and personnel were fit and ready for service.

808 Squadron was previously commissioned into the RAN during the 1950s when it operated fighter aircraft from the navy's aircraft carriers HMA Ships Sydney and Melbourne.

The re-commissioned 808 Squadron not only inherits its predecessors' crest, battle honours and motto 'Strength in Unity',

but also a legacy of operational excellence, courage under fire and of breaking new ground in naval aviation.

The MRH-90 multi-role helicopter is being acquired jointly by the navy and the army.

Navy will use the shared aircraft for the maritime support tasks previously performed by the Sea King helicopter, while army will use it to replace their Blackhawk helicopters as a battlefield and special operations support helicopter.

Navy and army MRH will also operate together in the ADF's two new large Canberra Class amphibious ships as they enter service from 2014.

The commissioning follows the MRH-90's certification and acceptance for service by the ADF Airworthiness Authority and the Chief of Navy.

It is the culmination of three years of training and trials.

The aircraft are already operating at sea in HMAS Choules and HMAS Tobruk conducting training and Operational Test and Evaluation.

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## Fleet review to feature flypast

By LEUT LAUREN RAGO

THE Royal Australian Navy's Fleet Air Arm (FAA) will play a spectacular role in the International Fleet Review (IFR) from October 3-11, including a combined flypast above more than 40 ships for the salute on Sydney Harbour.

More than a dozen navy helicopters and hundreds of members of the FAA will contribute to marking 100 years since the nation's first RAN Fleet Entry in 1913.

And in a preparation for the event four of the navy's Eurocopter AS-350BA Squirrel helicopters based at HMAS Albatross have been dressed in their International Fleet Review (IFR) livery.

723 Squadron, along with ADF and visiting military aircraft, will be participating in aerial displays during the IFR.

On October 4, 1913 the flagship, HMAS Australia, led the new Australian Fleet Unit comprising HMA Ships Melbourne, Sydney, Encounter, Warrego, Parramatta and Yarra into Sydney Harbour for the first time to be greeted by thousands of cheering citizens lining the foreshore.

The FAA centenary celebrations will also showcase the way it supports today's fleet with the helicopters that have become integral to navy operations.

Major aviation events within the IFR include a variety of aerial demonstrations and support activities.

These are expected to include, helicopter flag flying, tactical mission demonstrations, photographic support, VIP transport and medical evacuation standby.

On Saturday, October 5, the IFR will include a streamed formation flypast and ceremonial salute for the Governor General Quentin Bryce AC, CVO, at the exact same moment that warships on the harbour are making their salute.

That evening, IFR will provide a spectacular event to light up Sydney Harbour with fireworks and maritime technology like never before.

Aviation planning for the IFR is being undertaken by a small team of navy reservists and permanent navy personnel, working within the Headquarters Fleet Air Arm and the IFR



**Staff from Fleeting Image apply the International Fleet Review (IFR) livery to the second of four AS-350BA Squirrel helicopters operated by 723 Squadron at HMAS Albatross in preparation for their role during the IFR in October. Photograph: ABIS Alan Lancaster**

Co-ordination Cell in Sydney.

Commander Rick Allen is the IFR manager within the Headquarters Fleet Air Arm, a reserve officer who has worked within the FAA since 1992 as a Maritime Aviation Warfare Officer, mostly flying Seahawk helicopters.

CMDR Allen remembers a similar spectacle during navy's 75th anniversary celebrations in 1986.

"I was in my second last year of high school and was only 15 months from joining the navy as a bright-eyed midshipman. I remember the '86 Fleet Review and harbour displays being a strong motivation towards joining the

navy and my personal enthusiasm for the Fleet Air Arm," he said.

"A special part of the events in October will be the wide variety of participants.

"Spectators and aircraft enthusiasts are likely to see military helicopters and aeroplanes representing a number of our visiting navy partners.

"In addition to the helicopters from each of our commissioned air squadrons, there will also be other defence aircraft and some wonderful heritage aeroplanes that have a close connection to navy.

"It is important to highlight that it won't just be aircrew who are involved

in the IFR. As ever, it will be a co-operative team effort between maintainers, air crew, engineering support personnel and many others who will work to ensure that aviation aspects of IFR are safe, spectacular and well received by the general public.

"Most people in the community don't get to see navy's ships and helicopters, let alone in the concentration being assembled for IFR.

"It will be such a special opportunity for people who were not around in '86 or '88 and who don't normally get the chance to see our helicopter operations up close."

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## Training opportunity a highpoint

By **ANDREW HERRING**

FOR four members of the Nowra-based 816 Squadron, deploying to sea as part of the flight embarked in the Upgraded Anzac Class frigate HMAS Perth will forever be a career highlight.

For three of the aircraft maintainers, this deployment is their first experience at sea, while for Chief Petty Officer Aviation Technician – Aircraft (CPOATA) Michael Wratten, it is his first time as flight senior maintenance supervisor, responsible for leading the aircraft maintenance team.

Able Seaman Aviation Technician – Aircraft (ABATA) Steven Cuthbert and Able Seamen Aviation Technicians – Avionics (ABATV) Patrick Davis and Barry Cruikshank had to complete more than two years' training before being considered for a seagoing deployment.

All three eagerly volunteered for the chance, but competition was tough. They had to be qualified as fully fledged tradespersons, meet individual readiness requirements and complete seagoing prerequisite training courses.

They were selected from around 15 volunteers as the best qualified, most prepared and highest performing technicians.

"I felt nervous and excited about the chance to come to sea," Able Seaman Cruikshank said.

"It's different working and eating while the ship is moving but you get used to it. I haven't been seasick yet.

"It was also impressive to see the aircraft landing on the deck while the ship was moving around."

"We get trained for everything we need to know to live at sea during recruit training, but we just have to try to remember all the things we learned about communal living such as evening rounds and daily cleaning station duties," said Able Seaman Davis.

Able Seaman Cuthbert agreed that adjusting to communal living has been one of the early lessons learned from the trip.

"It's not hard, it's just very different from what we're used to ashore," he said.

As well as maintaining their S-70B-2 Seahawk helicopter, these first-timers



**S-70B-2 Seahawk helicopter Tiger 80 from 816 Squadron on the flight deck of HMAS Perth with aviation technical sailors (from left) AB Steven Cuthbert, AB Barry Cruikshank, CPO Michael Wratten and AB Patrick Davis.**

have been involved in whole-ship activities such as under way replenishments, when Perth receives fuel and stores from a replenishment ship.

For 18-year naval veteran CPO Michael Wratten, leading a Seahawk helicopter maintenance crew at sea is the natural next step in his career progression.

"Leadership at sea is more difficult than ashore, as I have to balance the needs of

the flight with the rest of the ship," he said.

"Every department impacts on the others, so it's a 24 hour-a-day job working with people to co-ordinate what we're doing so the whole team works."

As if earning their stripes at sea was not special enough, doing it while Perth in a busy exercise environment has been an added bonus.

"I've served 18 years in the navy, but I've never been in an exercise like this," CPO Wratten said.

"Seeing the live gun firing, what's happening in the operations room and how we're working with other ships has been a real eye opener."

The training detachment returns to 816 Squadron at HMAS Albatross later this month.

### Congratulations to HMAS Albatross

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## Romeo romances the navy

THE first of 24 new Seahawk Romeo helicopters being built for the Royal Australian Navy to be based at HMAS Albatross is almost complete.

Aircraft one is on the final assembly line where engines, gearboxes and cockpit equipment are being fitted.

All up four MH0-60R (Romeo) aircraft are under construction at various stages.

Each helicopter will take 14 months to manufacture from when construction starts on the airframe to when the fit-out is completed.

Construction is undertaken in three states of the US, with the multi-billion dollar contract seeing aircraft assembled in three phases starting in Troy in Alabama and then being trucked by road to Stratford in Connecticut.

The helicopters are being manufactured by Sikorsky Aircraft Corporation and Lockheed Martin.

Air 9000 Phase 8 resident project

team leader Commander Nyree Cornelius was the first RAN member to see the Romeo in production.

"Seeing them in person really struck home how real and how close we are to this new capability being realised," CMDR Cornelius said.

The first two helicopters are expected to be accepted by the RAN in December, and enter initial service early next year.

"Inspecting the first RAN Romeo on completion of its first stage of production is a memory I will no doubt treasure for years to come," CMDR Cornelius said.

The first RAN aircraft will be the 168th Romeo to be manufactured and will be known as N48-001 once in service.

Project Air 9000 Phase 8 was approved by the government in June 2011 at a cost of \$3.2 billion.

The project will acquire 24 Romeos, a range of training devices and mission support systems.

## Tenderers shortlisted for helicopter training system

THREE tenderers have been selected for Project Air 9000 Phase 7, which will provide a new helicopter aircrew training system to be based at HMAS Albatross.

The new system will meet the future rotary wing training needs of the Australian Defence Force (ADF).

AIR 9000 Phase 7 will deliver a new joint helicopter aircrew training system for the army and navy.

This system will service new helicopters to be operated by the future ADF. These include 22 Tiger armed reconnaissance helicopters, 47 MRH 90 multi-role helicopters, 24 Seahawk Romeo maritime combat helicopters, and seven CH-47 (F) Chinook medium lift helicopters.

The new joint training system will allow the retirement of 40 Kiowa helicopters operated by the army and 13 Squirrel navy helicopters.

The new training system will comprise a combination of light twin-engine helicopters, with options for basic and advanced avionic systems; a mix of synthetic training devices (simulators and part-task trainers); new training,



The new MRH90 will use the new helicopter training system.

administration and warehousing facilities; and integrated support. An aviation training vessel will also be supplied as a component of the new training system.

The three shortlisted tenderers are the teams led by Australian Aerospace Ltd, Boeing Defence Australia Ltd and Raytheon Australia Pty Ltd.

The tender was issued in early 2012.

The three shortlisted Tenderers will now enter the second phase of the evaluation, which will include the development and evaluation of final proposals.

A decision on the successful tenderer is expected by mid-2014, with training on the new system expected to begin in 2016-17.

The total project value is up to \$1 billion.



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CAE provides world-class simulation and training services for the Australian Defence Forces, and we are currently developing the simulators for the Royal Australian Navy's next-generation MH-60R naval helicopter. We have provided training support services for the RAN in the Shoalhaven for close to 15 years, and look forward to continuing our support at HMAS Albatross.

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## Congratulations on this anniversary

Being a part of creating the story and the memories was exciting, challenging and rewarding. There are many stories and friendships that make up this anniversary.

We all have one to tell. Have you shared your stories with your family and grandkids?

As a funeral director I see many lost opportunities and hear of many stories that were never told.

Once we are gone, who tells our story? On this anniversary tell your stories, and create more memories.

Ian Strathie - Funeral Director - CPO retired. RAN '64- '84



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