



# Media Release

The Hon Alan Griffin MP  
Minister for Veterans' Affairs

VA044

Sunday, 31 May 2009

## WWII SURVIVORS MARK THE DAY SYDNEY CAME UNDER ATTACK

Survivors of the Japanese attack on Sydney Harbour during the Second World War were joined by the Minister for Veterans' Affairs, Alan Griffin, at a ceremony in Sydney today honouring the 21 Australian and British sailors killed in the attack.

Mr Griffin said 67 years ago Sydney came under direct attack from the Japanese, just ten weeks after the bombing of Darwin in February 1942.

"On 31 May 1942, three Japanese midget submarines launched an attack on Sydney Harbour," Mr Griffin said.

"The first submarine became entangled in the boom net situated across the harbour and her crew, realising their situation was hopeless, set off a demolition charge destroying the submarine. A second submarine entered the harbour and fired torpedoes at the cruiser USS *Chicago*. Narrowly missing the *Chicago*, one torpedo detonated under the converted ferry HMAS *Kuttabul*, which was being used as accommodation for Australian and British naval personnel. Nineteen Royal Australian Navy and two Royal Navy sailors were killed in the attack."

Mr Griffin stood alongside survivors of the tragedy and their families at today's memorial service at HMAS *Kuttabul*, the naval base named after the torpedoed vessel, laying a wreath in honour of those killed in the attack.

"The events that unfolded in Sydney that day are an important chapter in Australia's wartime history and those lost and those who survived should be honoured and remembered," Mr Griffin said.

Mr Griffin said in November 2006 the wreck of the second submarine was discovered by a group of divers off Sydney's northern beaches. Until 2006, its location was a complete mystery. A third midget submarine also entered the harbour that night but was destroyed by depth-charges before it had fired any torpedoes. Sections of two of the submarines are on display at the Australian War Memorial in Canberra. Another section of one of the submarines is also on display at the Royal Australian Navy Heritage Centre at Garden Island.

Historical images of the Japanese attack on Sydney Harbour are available from the Australian War Memorial's Media Centre [www.awm.gov.au/media/](http://www.awm.gov.au/media/). Email [media@awm.gov.au](mailto:media@awm.gov.au) to order images. An animated version of the attack can be accessed at [www.ww2australia.gov.au/underattack/sydneyharbour.html](http://www.ww2australia.gov.au/underattack/sydneyharbour.html)

**Media enquiries: Sasha Nimmo 0437 863 109**

**Editor's note:** The relatives of the 21 killed on the HMAS *Kuttabul* are entitled to receive a Navy Bereavement Pin – commemorating the life and service of those who died whilst serving in the RAN. Visit [www.navy.gov.au/Navy\\_Bereavement\\_Pin](http://www.navy.gov.au/Navy_Bereavement_Pin) or telephone (02) 6266 2285 for more information.

The VVCS – Veterans and Veterans Families Counselling Service can be contacted 24 hours a day, seven days a week on **1800 011 046**. To receive the Minister's media releases automatically by **email** subscribe at [minister.dva.gov.au/subscribe.htm](http://minister.dva.gov.au/subscribe.htm)