



Media Release

The Hon Alan Griffin MP
Minister for Veterans' Affairs

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AUSTRALIAN NAVAL TRAGEDY REMEMBERED TODAY

On the 68th anniversary of the sinking of the HMAS *Sydney* during the Second World War, Minister for Veterans' Affairs Alan Griffin encouraged Australians to pay tribute to the 645 men who lost their lives in the tragedy.

"The sinking of *Sydney* and the death of her crew was one of Australia's greatest naval tragedies. I hope that, now the wreck has been located and the commission of inquiry into the loss of the *Sydney* has handed down its findings, the families of those lost have some certainty as to the fate of their loved ones," Mr Griffin said.

HMAS *Sydney* sailed from Fremantle on 11 November 1941 on a routine escort mission. On her way home, *Sydney* crossed paths with the German raider *Kormoran* 130 miles off the West Australian coastline.

After failing to identify itself *Kormoran*, masquerading as an unarmed Dutch merchant ship, opened fire on *Sydney*. Despite fierce attempts to defend herself, *Sydney* sank killing the 645 Australian crew onboard. Although *Sydney*'s return fire forced *Kormoran* to abandon ship, some 317 of her German crew survived and were later interred in Australia.

"For more than 60 years, the location of the *Sydney* and *Kormoran* has remained a mystery until both wrecks were located on 17 March 2008 around 112 nautical miles off Steep Point, Western Australia," Mr Griffin said.

"Today we commemorate the 645 Australians who died onboard and pay tribute to their service, sacrifice and bravery. We also acknowledge the suffering and grief of the families left behind.

"To ensure the memory of those lost endures, in May this year the Australian Government declared the HMAS *Sydney II* memorial in Geraldton, Western Australia, a memorial of national significance.

"My Department also honoured the memory of the *Sydney* crew last year, producing a poster featuring her crew, which was sent to schools, ex-service organisations, aged care facilities and government agencies across the country."

Photographs and video footage of the *Kormoran* and the *Sydney*'s final resting place on the sea bed are now part of the Australian War Memorial collection and are available to media at www.awm.gov.au/media. More information on HMAS *Sydney* and a copy of the poster is available on the [DVA website](#).

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