



Media Release

The Hon Alan Griffin MP
Minister for Veterans' Affairs

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MERCHANT MARINERS COMMEMORATED ON NATIONAL DAY

The Minister for Veterans' Affairs, Alan Griffin, encouraged Australians to mark the important contribution of Australia's merchant mariners to our wartime efforts on Merchant Navy Day today.

"The Merchant Navy has been an important part of Australia's war efforts – helping to transport troops, supplies and other important cargoes across dangerous seas and oceans," Mr Griffin said.

Thousands of Australian merchant mariners served on Australian, Commonwealth and Allied ships during both World Wars.

Merchant ships were often in grave danger from enemy submarines, hostile aircraft, mines and unpredictable weather conditions. They were easy targets, unarmed or lightly armed and carrying heavy cargoes making them slower and less manoeuvrable than navy ships.

"On Merchant Navy Day we commemorate the service and sacrifice of all Australian merchant mariners. Their contribution to our war efforts was invaluable and we are forever grateful for their bravery in getting the job done in dangerous and difficult conditions," Mr Griffin said.

Australian and Commonwealth memorials commemorate 435 Australian merchant mariners known to have been lost in both World Wars. All merchant mariners who lost their lives are honoured at the Australian War Memorial in Canberra. Those with no known grave are honoured at Commonwealth War Graves Commission Memorials to the Missing in Sydney, the Northern Territory, Port Moresby, Hong Kong as well as London's Tower Hill.

In consultation with merchant mariners, the first Wednesday of September was chosen for Merchant Navy Day, marking the loss of the first Allied merchant ship in 1939.

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