COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA

JOINT STANDING COMMITTEE

ON

FOREIGN AFFAIRS, DEFENCE AND TRADE

(Defence Subcommittee)

Reference: HMAS *Sydney* inquiry

PERTH

Thursday, 16 April 1998

OFFICIAL HANSARD REPORT

CANBERRA

JOINT STANDING COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN AFFAIRS, DEFENCE AND TRADE

(Defence Subcommittee)

Members:

Senator MacGibbon (Chair)
Mr Ted Grace (Deputy Chair)

Senator Bourne	Mr Bob Baldwin
Senator Ferguson	Mr Bevis
Senator Sandy Macdonald	Mr Bradford
Senator Margetts	Mr Brereton (ex-officio)
	Mr Brough
	Mr Dondas
	Mr Georgiou
	Mr Hicks
	Mr Lieberman
	Mr McLeay
	Mr Price
	Dr Southcott
	Mr Taylor

To inquire into and report on:

The circumstances of the sinking of HMAS *Sydney* off the Western Australian coast on 19 November 1941, with particular reference to:

(1) the extent to which all available archival material has been fully investigated and whether any relevant material has been misplaced or destroyed;

(2) all relevant archival material available from allied and former enemy forces;

(3) the desirability and practicability of conducting a search for the HMAS *Sydney* and the extent to which the Commonwealth Government should participate in such a search should one be deemed desirable and practicable;

(4) the practicability of accurately locating the grave of an alleged body from HMAS *Sydney* which was allegedly buried on Christmas Island;

(5) the identification of any scientific procedures now available which could verify the identity of human remains alleged to be those of a crewman of HMAS *Sydney* buried on Christmas Island if and when such remains were located;

(6) measures which should be taken to protect and honour the final resting

places, if and when located, of HMAS *Sydney* and KSN *Kormoran*.

WITNESSES

JOINT STANDING COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN AFFAIRS, DEFENCE AND TRADE

(Defence Subcommittee)

Circumstances of the sinking of HMAS Sydney

PERTH

Thursday, 16 April 1998

Present

Mr Taylor (Acting Chair)

Senator Sandy Macdonald — Mr Dondas

Senator Margetts

Subcommittee met at 9.04 a.m.

Mr Taylor took the chair.

ACTING CHAIR (Mr Taylor)—On behalf of the Defence Subcommittee of the Joint Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade, we welcome you all here this morning to what I am sure will be a productive couple of days. I apologise on behalf of the Chairman of the Defence Subcommittee, Senator MacGibbon, who at short notice has had to go overseas with the Minister for Defence. I am a member of this subcommittee but I am Chairman of the Foreign Affairs Subcommittee and, as some of you in the audience would know, I spent over three decades in naval uniform myself. My younger brother retired last year as Chief of Naval Staff and I have a brother-in-law who is the Commodore at HMAS *Cerberus* in Victoria, so I still have strong links with the navy even though I have now been in the parliament for 10 years.

We look forward today and tomorrow to a very productive segment of an important inquiry. This is a very emotional subject and a lot of innuendo and suggestion has been put around about this sinking. It does remain, of course, one of the mysteries of naval action at sea, in any conflict.

The point I should make to everyone this morning is that this is an open and very frank inquiry. There is no secrecy involved in this inquiry. This committee has access to every piece of documentation that is available that we can get hold of, so please do not think that this in any way is some sort of clearing house for something that is inconsequential. It is a very important subject in the national interest. It is very important for Australia as a nation. It is very important for those who have served and continue to serve. It is very important for the families who have been involved in this tragedy—and there is no other word for it: it was a tragedy, irrespective of the fact that it was in a World War II situation.

I officially declare open this public hearing of the Defence Subcommittee of the Joint Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade. I can assure you that we will attempt to leave no stone unturned in terms of what this sinking is all about, and the circumstances, and in listening to the views that a lot of people in this room have. Tomorrow, from about mid-morning until lunch time, we will have an open forum segment. Those of you not officially listed to appear before this committee today or in the early part of tomorrow morning are very welcome to be involved in that forum.

This hearing is the second in an inquiry presently being conducted by the Defence Subcommittee into the loss of HMAS *Sydney* in 1941 off the coast of Western Australia with the loss of all 645 crew. The subcommittee has received a large number of submissions from all over Australia. As one would expect, there has been significant interest from Western Australia. We will be hearing from a number of groups and individuals today and tomorrow and, as I have said, there will be an opportunity for others to discuss their views with the subcommittee in the second half of tomorrow morning.

The subcommittee has been asked to examine the circumstances of the loss of HMAS *Sydney* and, in particular, examine, firstly, whether there is any archival material either in Australia or overseas that may not have been examined; secondly, whether it is desirable or

even practical to conduct a search for the *Sydney*; thirdly, whether the body on Christmas Island identified by many to be from the *Sydney* can be located and, indeed, can be identified; and, lastly, what measures should be taken to protect and honour the final resting places of both the *Sydney* and the German raider *Kormoran*, which also sank after the engagement.

I formally welcome everybody here today and again pass on my apologies for Senator David MacGibbon, the chair of this subcommittee. We will call first the representative from the Western Australian Maritime Museum.

[9.10 a.m.]

HENDERSON, Mr Graeme John, Director, Western Australian Maritime Museum, Cliff Street, Fremantle, Western Australia

ACTING CHAIR—Welcome. I will just say to you, indeed to all other witnesses who are to appear, that, unlike some other committees of the parliament including the treaties committee where I am chairman and I still require witnesses to be sworn or affirmed, this committee has decided that we will not do that. I remind you that these are legal proceedings of the parliament and warrant the same respect which proceedings of the houses of parliament demand. Although the subcommittee does not require you to give evidence on oath, you should be aware that this does not alter the importance of the occasion. The deliberate misleading of the subcommittee may be regarded as a contempt of parliament. The subcommittee prefers that all evidence be given in public, but should you at any stage wish to give any evidence in private you may ask to do so and the subcommittee will give consideration to your request.

We have received the Western Australian Maritime Museum's submission and it has been authorised for publication. Mr Henderson, are there any additions or corrections to that submission?

Mr Henderson—No, Mr Chairman, I have no alterations or additions.

ACTING CHAIR—I invite you to make a short opening statement.

Mr Henderson—The Western Australia Maritime Museum has a responsibility under the Historic Shipwrecks Act for the management of historic shipwrecks in the state of Western Australia. The *Sydney*, if and when it is found, will be off the coast of Western Australia and therefore it has a direct relevance to the Western Australian Maritime Museum. We take the view that whether a ship has been found or not, if it is thought to lie in our waters then we have an involvement in that site. For that reason, the concept of a management plan is something of importance to us.

ACTING CHAIR—Thank you very much. The first question we should ask is: does the Western Australian Maritime Museum have a view as to the whereabouts of either or both ships?

Mr Henderson—The Western Australia Maritime Museum has the view that there is no finite determined position for the site and that it is a difficult situation in terms of the concept of searches for that reason, despite the improvements in technology that have occurred over the last decade or so.

ACTING CHAIR—Do you, for example, put any credence on arguments and, in fact, submissions that this committee has received that the ships went down much further south

than the official history reports?

Mr Henderson—I do not have an expert view on that particular matter. I know that there has been a variety of views put forward on those things, but I do not have an expert view on that matter.

Senator MARGETTS—One of the issues that has been brought to the committee is that a lot of the information that would have been taken at the time which might help in the committee's determination does not now seem to be available. Has the museum been involved in locating or looking for any of that information that might have been available perhaps in the 1950s but does not seem to be available now?

Mr Henderson—The museum has taken a role in the exploration of the documentation, partly through the processes of bringing people together. It had a *Sydney* forum several years ago which I think was very successful in bringing together the people who have knowledge of this area and raising some of the issues about where documents might be searched for. The museum itself has not attempted to take the lead in the actual search for this documentation, but it has taken a role of bringing together as many of the people as possible who might have understanding of these areas.

It is, of course, interested in pursuing the documentation search in all areas. For that reason, we have developed a fairly extensive filing system of records on the matter. It has not taken steps beyond that.

Senator MARGETTS—Has the museum taken any particular interest in elements such as the location of the carley float or any of the information that has come from that?

Mr Henderson—We have an interest in that. We have a curatorial department called the maritime archaeology department. That is where the research side of the museum's work is centred for shipwrecks. People there have been involved in all of the different elements of the exploration of the documentary archives. I am not sure where you are heading beyond that.

ACTING CHAIR—In terms of the carley float, was the scientific examination carried out in 1993 by the Australian War Memorial done unilaterally by the Australian War Memorial? Was your museum involved in any way in that scientific examination?

Mr Henderson—We were not involved in any direct fashion in that examination.

Senator MARGETTS—Some people have expressed the opinion that, if the floats were made of different materials, that would indicate that the one that was washed up on Christmas Island potentially could not have been from the HMAS *Sydney* because it was made of different materials. Do you share that belief?

Mr Henderson—I am aware of the discussions about that, but I do not have a particular view on that.

Mr DONDAS—Did the forum that was organised to research some of the documentation in the archives have the full cooperation of the Australian archival service in trying to ascertain or get further information from the archival service? Have they been hindered in their attempt to gain further knowledge?

Mr Henderson—I think it is a controversial subject. I know that some people take the view that there has been hindrance. I am personally not aware of hindrance. I do know that one of my staff members sought funding to do further exploration of Commonwealth archives at one stage and was unsuccessful in the attempt to get funding for that search. I do not personally regard that as evidence of a hindrance.

Mr DONDAS—Has nobody complained to you that they had been along to the archival service and not been able to get the information that they wanted? Have all the documents been made available? You are coordinating a group. You have said that your endeavours have been to try and bring people together, and not for the museum to take the major role in terms of determining the outcomes. You said that you brought people together at a forum. Obviously some members of that forum would have come together and said, 'Let's go off to the archives to see what further information we can get.' Have they run into any problems? You must be aware if they have or not.

Mr Henderson—No-one has personally complained to me about this matter. I am aware that people have personally complained to my research staff. There are many cases on file of people being concerned that they are not getting information.

Mr DONDAS—On another area, if we were lucky enough to locate the sunken vessels and they were outside Australian waters, what would be the Western Australian Maritime Museum's role in that?

Mr Henderson—There are several issues here. Firstly, the legislation claims the scope of the outside of the continental shelf. In almost all other cases in the past, nations have not claimed such generous areas of the seabed and there has been some discussion among lawyers about the question of whether Australia would be able to claim such areas or not. Even if it was not able to claim such jurisdiction, there is still the issue that warships are generally claimed by the country that originally owned that warship.

In addition to that, there are discussions going on at the moment within UNESCO along the lines of developing an international convention for the preservation of material in that area which is outside territorial limits. The understanding that we have is that the legislation going to the extreme of the continental shelf should indeed cover this. We cannot be clear until the finding.

Mr DONDAS—A few moments ago you said you had a staff member from the museum who was interested in doing further research and applied for a grant to do further archival work. How long ago was that?

Mr Henderson—My recollection is that it was about two years ago.

Mr DONDAS—Do you know which organisation she or he made an application to?

Mr Henderson—It was a he and I do not recall the details of the application.

ACTING CHAIR—We will come back to the Historic Shipwrecks Act and the legislative parameters for your museum's involvement. First of all, who within the Western Australian Maritime Museum is a delegate of the federal minister administering that act. Is it your director?

Mr Henderson—I am the director of the Western Australia Maritime Museum.

ACTING CHAIR—Are you the delegate?

Mr Henderson—Yes, I am the delegate.

ACTING CHAIR—And you cannot delegate that further, you are the delegate.

Mr Henderson—I am the delegate. To some extent it is a formality. In each state the Commonwealth has a delegate for the carrying out of a program under the Historic Shipwrecks Act. In each case we have a funded program from the Commonwealth. The Commonwealth has generally tried to keep a fairly small staff for the running of that act and they rely on the states to carry out the programs which bring into effect the spirit of the act.

ACTING CHAIR—Just to go back to the parameters of the coverage of that act, and you made mention generally to that in response to Mr Dondas's question, can you just go through the scope of water area that the legislation has coverage over? In other words, how far out is the EZ?

Mr Henderson—The legislation specifies that it applies to the outer limits of the continental shelf. At the interior end it is the low-water mark. It covers virtually all of the shipwrecks in Western Australia. The exception to that is shipwrecks which are above the low-water mark or in rivers or bays. The question of bays is a reasonably complicated issue in terms of the exact nature of the determination of a bay. A bay with a narrow mouth tends to be defined as a bay and a bay with a wide mouth tends not to be defined as a bay.

ACTING CHAIR—Shark Bay, for example, is pretty wide.

Mr Henderson—Shark Bay is Commonwealth waters. Cockburn Sound has recently

been determined to be Commonwealth waters, although there was some debate about that question.

ACTING CHAIR—What does that mean for the continental shelf in nautical mile terms from the coast generally? It varies, but what about in general terms?

Mr Henderson—It does vary a great deal, so I cannot give a specific answer to that. At places like Ningaloo Reef it is only a matter of some 10 to 15 miles; at other places it might be 100 miles.

Senator MARGETTS—Given that this committee may come to some recommendation about where the wrecks may be found, or one or two options of where the wrecks may be found, if it were possible for this committee to come to a conclusion about a location within a relatively defined area, what would be the appropriate technologies that could be used to locate or search for those shipwrecks?

Mr Henderson—As I mentioned before, I am not an expert on the technologies. I am aware that some quite revolutionary technologies have been developed over the last decade or so. Dr Bob Ballard of Woods Hole in the United States is perhaps the leading exponent in that area. He was the one that found the *Titanic* some years ago. We have had correspondence with people at Woods Hole. That is something that other people will have a great deal more knowledge of than myself.

Senator MARGETTS—Is this a very expensive technology?

Mr Henderson—It is expensive technology. It involves substantial vessels to carry out such searches with that technology as well.

Senator MARGETTS—Obviously, the use of technology, or the choice of use of technology, would depend on whether the area you are looking in was very deep water or an area of much less depth, would it not?

Mr Henderson—Yes, indeed.

Senator MARGETTS—Potentially, if the wreck was to be located or if the search area was in a much shallower area, you could use technology that exists within Australia for research?

Mr Henderson—Yes. If it was in water of less than 200 feet, for instance, we would be able to use the sort of technology which my staff are using this week in a search for shipwrecks in the north-west of Western Australia.

ACTING CHAIR—Do you have a formal agreement with Woods Hole? Is there a formal memorandum of understanding or something between the museum and Woods Hole?

Mr Henderson—No. We do not have a formal agreement, but we have correspondence with them which indicates a positive relationship.

Mr DONDAS—If, for example, the wreck of the *Sydney* was located, what would be the Western Australian Maritime Museum's view in terms of inspection of it at the bottom?

Mr Henderson—The concept of inspection is going to depend on what the depth is. My general understanding is that it is going to be of extreme depth, and therefore it will be a complicated issue just getting that inspection done.

Mr DONDAS—But you would not have any objections if the capacity and technology was available to be able to inspect the wreck?

Mr Henderson—Effectively, that is a requirement under the act. We would certainly not have objections to that.

ACTING CHAIR—Is the MOU that you have with the HMAS *Sydney* Foundation Trust a public document?

Mr Henderson—I am not aware of any reasons for it not being public. It is not something which we have circulated widely.

ACTING CHAIR—Is it something that could be provided to the subcommittee?

Mr Henderson—I see no reasons against that.

ACTING CHAIR—Would you like to take that on notice?

Mr Henderson—Sure.

ACTING CHAIR—You would obviously want to talk to the foundation trust. We will be having them here later on anyhow. If it is possible, the subcommittee would like to have that.

On Mr Dondas's question about access, quite apart from the legislative requirements, does the museum have a view as to whether—in a hypothetical situation, if the wreck or wrecks are found and, hopefully, throw some light on the cause or causes of what happened—people should have access to it?

Mr Henderson—The concept of attempting to gain knowledge is something that we are very much in favour of. The concept of access for such things as recreation or salvage, we would be much opposed to.

ACTING CHAIR—If the *Sydney* was found and the scientific work was done—

which you say legislatively and ethically should be done—what about the recreational side of it? What controls and safeguards would the museum, and you as a delegate, be putting into place—assuming that it was in water that people could have access to, which is unlikely, but it might be?

Mr Henderson—We would take the view that it should be made a protected zone under the act. The act has provision for a specific protected zone and, under that zoning, it can give prohibition to the presence of more vessels. It can prohibit the taking into that area of equipment that might be used for working on a shipwreck. It has a number of specified provisions, and those provisions can be varied by the minister according to the site.

ACTING CHAIR—In your experience over the last 30 years, what has been the quantum jump in terms of underwater exploration that people like yourselves have access to? Has there been a very large quantum jump?

Mr Henderson—The quantum jump has been huge in terms of the area of seabed on the globe which is now accessible to mankind. It has not meant a quantum jump for the Western Australian Maritime Museum because we have not been finding sites in deep water off Western Australia. Almost all of our sites in Western Australia are in shallow water. Indeed, I guess our reputation in Western Australia is for the excavation of shallow water-surf sites. Nevertheless, on a world scale, there has been a huge quantum leap which has given an unprecedented threat to the heritage on the seabed because the technological developments have taken place in a vacuum of any sort of public policy.

There is no legislation which effectively covers the deep seabed, but people have access to that deep seabed, primarily through developments that have taken place in the oil industry. The problem that people with a view to heritage preservation have is that people involved in the oil industry do not always have a strong sense of heritage. So, this means that there are people who are very mobile, people who are generally having good access to funds, people who are generally having good access to politicians, governments and so forth, and they have very good skills and very good equipment.

For people who are involved in preservation, those people generally are rather isolated, do not have those sorts of accesses, and tend to be limited to one area of one country. So, until there is some sort of international legislation covering the deep seabed, there is a dreadful threat to anything on the deep seabed.

ACTING CHAIR—What does that technology involve? Are we talking of laser technology, side scanning sonars, all that sort of stuff? Would you like to go into that in a little more detail?

Mr Henderson—I am not an expert on the equipment used, but there are submarines that can go down to three or five miles and further than that which can involve themselves in salvage work. This sort of salvage work means that any site on the seabed can now be found,

effectively. Now, I say that, but I am not saying that we are going to immediately find the *Sydney*. But it is possible for any site on the seabed now to be found.

ACTING CHAIR—What was the *Titanic* depth that we were told—

Mr Henderson—It is 12,000 feet.

ACTING CHAIR—So it is within the capability of Woods Hole, so long as the search area is better defined, to handle a search for the *Sydney*.

Mr Henderson—If the search area was better defined, then a search could be handled. My understanding is that Dr Bob Ballard feels that the site is not sufficiently narrowly defined.

ACTING CHAIR—It is too imprecise.

Senator SANDY MACDONALD—It is a bit difficult to come in when you have asked lots of the questions. I have some questions for the witness, but perhaps it is best not to ask any except about the technology developments that you talked about. What stage are they in the sense—if the site could be pinpointed—of what developments have taken place that would make it possible to carry out the search?

Mr Henderson—That depends on how clearly the area is defined. The general understanding of experts is that the area has not been adequately defined at this point, but I am not an expert on that area. The experts, as I understand it, take the view that the area has not been sufficiently defined for there to be a clear knowledge that a finding can take place.

Senator SANDY MACDONALD—Agreement was reached before 1991 for a search, but you said in your submission that the proposed search did not eventuate. What were the reasons for that?

Mr Henderson—I am not sure exactly what the reasons for it were, but I know that this question of how well the area is defined is continuously raised.

Senator MARGETTS—If I could follow up on some of my earlier questions, what kinds of information and records have become available to the museum about the *Sydney* over time?

Mr Henderson—There are government records, there is a certain amount of information coming from the German navy side and there are personal views of people from Western Australia who have thoughts about what they might have seen at the time. I guess they are the main three.

Senator MARGETTS—Do you have any position on such things as the location of a

post-mortem record of the sailor on Christmas Island?

Mr Henderson—I do not have specific knowledge about that, no.

Senator MARGETTS—The committee has been given information that there was a post-mortem examination that took place at the time, and presumably it was written down. Has the museum had any information about that?

Mr Henderson—I know that we do have some material on file on it, but I do not think we have in depth material on the post-mortem.

Senator MARGETTS—In depth?

Mr Henderson—I do not think we have the actual post-mortem.

Senator MARGETTS—No, but you have some information on file?

Mr Henderson—I understand so.

Senator MARGETTS—Would that be able to be made available to the committee?

Mr Henderson—I think that any of the material we have on file could be made available to the committee. I should say, though, that we have 31 files on the *Sydney* at this point.

Senator MARGETTS—If you could, that would be helpful.

Mr Henderson—Certainly.

Senator SANDY MACDONALD—Does the museum hold any wreckage or possible wreckage from the *Sydney*?

Mr Henderson—No.

Senator SANDY MACDONALD—In some of the submissions there is talk of some other carley floats that are held by somebody in the west. You are not a holder of any carley floats, perhaps carley floats that were independent of the *Sydney*, naval carley floats that did not directly relate to the *Sydney*?

Mr Henderson—We have two carley floats in our collection, and the origin of them is vague. I personally collected them from a warehouse in Fremantle which was about to be restored, and there were no records available at the time. Several people talked of where they may have come from, but there is nothing to clearly indicate that they are from the *Sydney*.

Senator SANDY MACDONALD—Are they damaged, and are they the same?

Mr Henderson—I have not seen the ones which are reputed to be from the *Sydney*. I have only seen the ones that we have in our collection. They are damaged, but it is not damage that would indicate to me that they have been damaged through warfare.

Senator SANDY MACDONALD—Are they the same?

Mr Henderson—I do not know. The two are the same as each other, but whether they are the same as the carley floats from, for instance, Christmas Island and so forth I am not sure.

ACTING CHAIR—Have they had a similar scientific examination to the one that is in the Australian War Memorial?

Mr Henderson—Not to my knowledge.

ACTING CHAIR—Wouldn't that be a reasonable step to take?

Mr Henderson—I think it would be a good step, yes.

ACTING CHAIR—Can you do that?

Mr Henderson—We could do that.

ACTING CHAIR—Do you have the funding to do that?

Mr Henderson—I am not clear in my mind as to what funding would be required. I am not aware in my mind at the moment, just off the cuff, that it would be a substantial funding problem, so I do not know—

ACTING CHAIR—The reason I ask is: the one in Canberra on the surface to start off with did not really have much to offer, but with a scientific examination it offered quite a lot, although it perhaps posed more questions than it answered. Could this committee ask the Western Australian Maritime Museum to carry out a scientific examination? In particular, I am asking in terms of shrapnel or foreign objects and sources of manufacture and all these sorts of things which came out in Canberra, although there is a fairly strong body of opinion that that is from the HMAS *Sydney*.

Mr Henderson—Yes, I think it would be relatively simple for us to organise such an examination.

ACTING CHAIR—How long would that take?

Mr Henderson—It should be possible to organise such an examination within a matter of months.

ACTING CHAIR—Could we ask you formally to do that?

Mr Henderson—Certainly.

ACTING CHAIR—I think that would be a good move.

Mr DONDAS—Mr Henderson, do you know Glenys McDonald?

Mr Henderson—Yes, but not well. I should say that, in many of these questions that you have been posing, I am not the person who has been directly involved. My research staff have generally been involved in these matters.

Mr DONDAS—In a submission she has made to the inquiry she says:

The Navy and the WA Maritime Museum have conducted numbers of specific 'spot' searches over the past years. No form of grid search was conducted until a small grid search recently by World Geoscience.

Did World Geoscience provide you with any evidence or any documentation after their grid search of that particular area?

Mr Henderson—In all cases that I am aware of, where any searches have been done, the results have been provided to us. We have them on file.

Mr DONDAS—Ms McDonald has done quite a bit of research since 1988 with people living at Port Gregory. They seem to have indicated in her submission that there was quite a lot of fireworks off their area some 300 kilometres south of where it was originally thought that the battle of HMAS *Sydney* took place. Has the Western Australian Maritime Museum done any work in that area to ask people if they have any debris or anything that may bring further information to light? Do you go out asking people if they have anything? Do you advertise in the paper? Do you write letters to people in small communities? Or do you just wait for somebody to say, 'We've got a bit of wreckage, it could be from anything', and you would have a look at it?

Mr Henderson—The approach that we have taken has been to try to provide a focal point for information. The HMAS *Sydney* forum was one of those. In addition to that, we have a regular process of site inspection going on, whereby we have teams in the field that go to all the coastal communities along the coast. That is the opportunity that they use to attempt to engage in communication with local people in that regard.

Mr DONDAS—I am following up Senator Macdonald's question in terms of the

Western Australian Maritime Museum. Has no wreckage at all been handed in to it over the last 58 years?

Mr Henderson—Not to my knowledge.

Mr DONDAS—Thank you.

ACTING CHAIR—I think that is just about it, Mr Henderson. Could you let us know formally about the scientific examination of the carley floats? You could correspond with the secretariat as soon as you possibly can on that. In that context, could you liaise with the Australian War Memorial in terms of the scientific data they have? There might be some sort of comparative study done.

Mr Henderson—Certainly. In conclusion, I feel that the concept of a management plan is extremely important in this area. The view I would take is that there is a need to develop a conservation plan as a first part of that and to develop that plan it is necessary that a statement of the significance of the HMAS *Sydney* be developed. The normal conservation procedure in terms of conservation plans is that a statement of significance is developed and then a strategy for enhancing or maintaining or recognising that significance is then developed from that statement of significance.

I think that it should be possible to develop that statement. I would hope that perhaps this inquiry could get that process going. It is a process that we at the Maritime Museum have conducted with a variety of other sites, but because this one is of such national significance that the question of who should be involved in the development of that statement of significance and the resulting conservation and management plan, some views of the subcommittee would be very much appreciated by the Maritime Museum.

ACTING CHAIR—Thank you very much. The *Hansard* record, of course, will be made available to you in due course for any corrections that you see appropriate. We thank you for your evidence.

[9.46 a.m.]

RYDING, Mr Ernest Verdun, Unit 1, 12 Yarruk Street, Yokine, Western Australia

ACTING CHAIR—Welcome, Mr Ryding. In what capacity are you appearing before the subcommittee today?

Mr Ryding—I am here in a private capacity with my own views and opinions. I do not represent any committee, although I am a foundation member of the HMAS *Sydney* Association. What I express is personal. Unfortunately, some of it had to be reciprocated because of some things which have come to light recently.

ACTING CHAIR—We will get into that. You heard what I had to say to the previous witness about the formal proceedings of this parliamentary subcommittee. I am sure you understand that; I will not repeat it. Would you like to make a short opening statement?

Mr Ryding—I have no wish to bore you with my medical problems, but I would like to advise that four years ago I had a stroke. I am totally blind on the left side of both eyes, and request that you bear with me for any reading difficulties I may have. Thank you for that.

With the passing of our association president, Mr John Ross, I am now the oldest and longest serving member of HMAS *Sydney* in WA, maybe in Australia, but who knows or who cares.

ACTING CHAIR—Thank you, and we thank you for coming along here this morning. At 82 years of age—and I am sure you will not mind that I mention that you are 82—it is a pleasure to have somebody of your age and background to appear before this subcommittee.

The personal views that you give are welcomed by the subcommittee, and of course we are particularly interested this morning in what you might say, bearing in mind that you were a member of that ship's company for four years or thereabouts prior to its sinking. We are particularly interested in some of the personalities, some of the ways and means of that ship, even under Captain Burnett. Would you just like, first of all, to perhaps give us a thumbnail sketch of your view? Firstly, let us have what rating you were in the ship, what your action station was and then perhaps your personal view of Captain Burnett.

Mr Ryding—I have detailed that but, off the cuff, I was a leading steward, classified as a corporal of stewards. I was in charge of all the stewards operating in the wardroom, the wardroom officers, and I was the personal steward to the commander, the first commander—the one before the one who went down with her.

As for my action station, I was in charge of what was known as B handling room.

That is the point on the ship where the cordite comes out of the magazine through a flash proof container at the circuit. I would load it into the hoist that supplied all the ammunition via the logging that was fired through B gun house—that is, every piece of cordite that was fired from B gun house I personally handled in the course of all our actions.

ACTING CHAIR—As corporal of stewards, and as the commanding officer's personal steward, you would have a fairly good idea of his personality and the dealings that the commanding officer had with his ship's company.

Mr Ryding—No. I was the commander's steward. The commanding officer was the captain.

ACTING CHAIR—There was a captain's steward?

Mr Ryding—The captain had two stewards.

ACTING CHAIR—As corporal of stewards you were responsible for them, anyhow.

Mr Ryding—I had no contact with the captain's personal stewards, only all the wardroom stewards who looked after the officers—the officers' meals, cabins, and all of those arrangements.

ACTING CHAIR—Can you tell the subcommittee a little bit about Captain Burnett?

Mr Ryding—My opinion of Captain Burnett—

ACTING CHAIR—Sorry, if I could just interrupt you, I might say the reason I ask this is because I think there have been some unfair and very pointed criticisms of Captain Burnett and we need to get a balanced view on the *Hansard* record of the personality of the commanding officer.

Mr Ryding—I have covered that in what I have brought today. As far as I am concerned, there have been very nasty things said about Captain Burnett which in my opinion are totally unfounded. In this little episode here, there was reason that Mr Templeton made such disparaging remarks. In navy parlance, his name was not even dry on the books. However, he has still gone out of his way and, as far as I am concerned, he has cultivated as many 'anti-Joe' Captain Burnett people as he could, and 'pro-Algy', the commander and his German friends, and he has taken their words as gospel. Anything that can be said against the captain he seems to have gone out of his way to find it and cultivate it. I do know personally in my capacity that the commander, very shortly before these incidents took place—I will not be reading this, I gather—

ACTING CHAIR—You can read it if you want to.

Mr Ryding—Anyhow, shortly before this incident took place, the commander had awarded a punishment which in navy parlance was a total green rub. It was 14 days stoppage of leave to a person who was totally innocent. The only recourse that person had was to request to see the captain through the commander to request an appeal against considered unjust punishment.

The process of that is that that person goes before the commander and requests to see the captain. In the course of that particular first interview for appeals of requestmen, all available officers attend the table at which the inquiry is conducted. The commander made some very disparaging remarks about the person appealing. However, he had no option but to grant the request.

As a result, within a day or so a captain has to conduct captain's defaulters and requestmen. This requestman made his statements to the captain in detail. This person had the support of many officers on the ship who did not like the commander. I can say that without doubt; he was not popular among many officers, not as the first lieutenant nor as the commander. He was promoted from first lieutenant to commander.

This person received a lot of support and information to conduct his own case appealing against the decision. There was the first day's captain's requestmen—and these details were all taken down—and the captain had to make up his mind. It was a very difficult position for the captain to be in, to overrule his commander, to revoke a punishment.

However, the next day, as was necessary and as advice came through, a standover which had been given on the first inquiry had to be conducted within 24 hours, which still resulted in a special trip for the captain to come down from the bridge onto the quarterdeck to conduct this session, again in the presence of all available officers. But as this person was a leading hand, nobody below the rate of a leading hand was allowed to attend. In the main it was only officers who were not on watch; they were all required to attend. Therefore, the bulk of the ship's officers were in attendance at such captain's occasions.

During the course of the evidence which was being given, the commander interrupted, out of order, to give still more comments on his decision. The captain turned to the commander and, in a very authoritative and stern voice, just said, 'Commander,' which left no doubt whatsoever in anybody's mind that the commander had been severely reprimanded because of the way he had carried on, and should not have done, and that left the captain no option but to totally scrub the charge and dismiss the case.

As a result, notwithstanding that Mr Templeton has given so much information, the fact was that the commander was critical of everything the captain did. It was very obvious to anybody who was in my position to know what was taking place, that anything the commander did to go out of his way to make the captain look an idiot was definitely the commander's ambition.

ACTING CHAIR—At the initial hearing in Canberra, this committee sought copies of confidential reports on all the officers involved, and that will include the commander. We thank you for that because that will give us a further insight into the persona of Captain Burnett. As corporal of stewards, we would not expect you to make a comment on his operational capabilities, but was he highly regarded amongst the ship's company, in the relatively short time that he had been there, in an operational sense?

Mr Ryding—In as much as we can refer to what we regard now as the target trip, which was the trip before *Sydney*'s last, Mr Templeton appeared to have different ideas to others in as much as that he seemed to think that only main armaments crews were instructed to close up. He regarded it as an unusual pipe—the pipe being the message over the PA system. As far as I am concerned, I had never heard it either.

I was down aft. As far as I was concerned, down aft, action stations were definitely sounded, otherwise I would not have even heard any pipe, let alone attend to close up on main armament. Also, when we did close up at action stations, in my job in the handing room the only communication I had with the outside world was a voice pipe. At the top of that voice pipe was a steward, who naturally was personally known to me, and he was my communication. He would not have been closed up at that position unless it had been action stations.

Also, at the beginning of the war, when the gunnery officer and the captain had to decide what points and everything were going to be manned and when and where, initially, for cruising stations—which is different to action stations—some stewards were allocated cruising station duties. After the first episode it was obvious that stewards and cooks could not attend daytime cruising.

As I did have the ear of most officers, if and when required, and personal contact with the commander, and then with the gunnery officer with the commander, I requested that all officer stewards and cooks be exempt from cruising stations in daytime. However, quite a few did have night cruising stations. I accept the fact that Mr Templeton said that *Sydney* would be at cruising stations when she intercepted the *Kormoran* because there was no reason to be otherwise. It was daytime—broad daylight.

In broad daylight, anything like that, the ship would be closed up at cruising stations, which involved the fully manned turret, one forward and one aft. Had there been need to go to action stations, as there was with the target discovery, when the masthead lookout sighted this target, it was an unidentified object on the surface. Naturally, having a report of an unidentified object—Captain Burnett being new to the ship—action stations were sounded. After a reasonably short time, when the object was identified as not being a ship, we reverted to cruising stations. Then, not being required at actions stations, I proceeded immediately to the upper deck, which would be one way of getting down aft. I saw this object in the water and, with my pre-war experience, immediately identified it as a battle practice target. Because of things I had seen, I thought I was possibly the only person who knew this.

Having left the ship when I did, I did not know who had left at the same time and who might still be alive. However, I have seen a report, which has been disclosed because of this inquiry, that it was accepted as possibly a battle practice target. We closed in on it. It was hoisted inboard by the ship's crane. I was witness to that and I did see on the end of the drums Singapore markings. As far as I was concerned those drums had come from Singapore. I have now found out that on the end of the other drums was something to do with Hong Kong as well. I did not see that end. That target was totally dismantled. It was very good quality timber and big stuff: 14- or 15-feet long, nine by two type of oregon stuff. The shipwright was very happy to get it and he put it in his racks for any further use.

ACTING CHAIR—Typical chippies.

Mr Ryding—Yes, typical chippie. The 44-gallon drums were brought back to Fremantle and unloaded when we returned. What happened to them I have no idea.

ACTING CHAIR—In terms of the wardroom, there was very little turnover in the wardroom at all, wasn't there? They were basically the original wardroom team?

Mr Ryding—Yes, the majority of the officers. There were some, like the surgeon, and some of the others who had spent so much time in the Med with us who were relieved. Actually it was because of the fact that the senior surgeon was relieved that I am alive today, because he had left the ship and he went back to Flinders Naval Depot. This is a bit beside the point, but we called in there on the way back from the east and he came out, saw me there and said, 'Are you still here?' I told him, 'Yes, and I'm going to desert when we get to Fremantle.' He said, 'What's the matter?' I said, 'I am just too sick to keep going.' We did not know what was wrong. He told me not to do anything stupid—I had almost eight years in by then. I knew then that he would make arrangements for me to be relieved, which he did. That is why I am alive today.

There was a certain number of officers, not very many, who were relieved, as you say. But the main officers—the gunnery officer, the navigator—

ACTING CHAIR—All the senior specialists were from the Med?

Mr Ryding—The specialists—the TL, the gunnery officer, the navigator and others, and the engineer commander. He commissioned the *Sydney* and he went down. He lived for his engines.

ACTING CHAIR—Who was the commander? Was he RAN or RN?

Mr Ryding—The commander, in my initial time as commander steward, was a Royal Navy man. He joined us in Sydney before the war and he was with us in all of our excursions. When we came back to Australia he left the ship in Sydney. He did bring his wife, two children and a nanny out from England. Because of a lot of personal contacts, I did

communicate with him after he left the ship and went back to England. We were friends, regardless of our positions, and open discussion was quite common.

ACTING CHAIR—Who was the RAN commander who replaced him?

Mr Ryding—The RAN commander had been the original RAN first lieutenant who was promoted to commander after the Royal Navy commander returned.

ACTING CHAIR—What was his name?

Mr Ryding—His name was Thruston. He was the one that you will find Mr Templeton referred to as Algy, because his name was Algernon. He was referred to as Algy by quite a lot. How he got the Algy name was that on one particular day during mess deck cleanings, when all bulkhead doors were closed and everybody had to be responsible for their own cleaning of the mess deck, Algy was proceeding from down aft to come up forward. He was trying to open the dogs on one of the bulkhead doors.

The chap who was cleaning it turned around and said, 'You're not coming through, Charlie. Get to buggery out of it; you are not bloody well coming through.' Pardon the language, but this is the way it was put. Anyhow, Algy finished up saying, 'This is not Charlie; this is Algy, your first lieutenant, and I bloody well am coming through'. So he named himself Algy right throughout the lower deck.

ACTING CHAIR—And he was a career officer, a permanent naval officer?

Mr Ryding—Yes, a permanent naval officer.

Senator MARGETTS—Mr Ryding, there has been a lot of interest, obviously, in the places the survivors were picked up from and the fact that the stories coincided, even though they were located in quite different places. You have expressed your concerns about the story that was told by the German survivors. In a situation where there has been an altercation between ships and a ship is sinking, people have to abandon ship and so on. How could a scenario, a story, be corroborated in such a way lasting for such a long time?

Mr Ryding—Other than ships in which we were involved in sinking in the Mediterranean, I had no dealings with any ships at all in a sinking position. I might add here that at no time, contrary to some reports, did *Sydney* ever board a ship. It had no reason to board a ship. But, with exercises of abandoning ship, everybody had a station to report to and knew which boats they would be in. The carley floats got thrown over the side because, pre-war, we did not have these Mae West life jackets which were all issued when the war started. But, for any exercises involving abandoning ship, you had to have your Mae West life jacket and report to your position because everybody had a station from which to abandon ship.

As to my opinion as far as the action, I do not know what would have happened, what

condition *Sydney* would have been in, but, as far as the *Kormoran* goes, going on the Germans' report, they had adequate time to set explosives to scuttle their ship and still appeared to have adequate time to launch all their boats and rafts. I am jumping the gun because I will not be commenting on this, but I am saying what I can remember. I would have considered that my captain—as would have anybody else—once we had abandoned ship, particularly knowing how far the Australian coast was, that he would have collected every boat and raft, mustered them all together and put lines on, because some of the German boats—as reported by the RAAF—appeared to have engines or motors in them. The object of the exercise should have been to rustle up everybody, collect them, and tow them towards the shore.

For some very convenient reason, the German captain put all of his badly injured into a very unstable rubber float which conveniently tipped over and they were all drowned. My theory on that is that had those men been picked up and required anaesthetic for treatment, they could have talked and told the truth under the influence of anaesthetic. It does not say much; it does not give much reward to his faithful crew who fought with him to have been got rid of that way.

The other question I raise is this: why did boats that appeared to have power stay in the area of the combat for four days, as Detmers said, with the hope of being picked up when the others were directed to go to the coast, those who had sails and had to row? As I say, why did he not muster all these boats together to look after his crew and proceed to shore or, if he thought he was going to be picked up, at least keep them all together? You are supposed to be faithful to everybody on board a ship and look after your shipmates, particularly in need. He was not looking after his devoted crew if they were devoted to him.

The fact was that they had had a victory. Okay, they were all heroes, and this was the way they wished to remain, but, however many members of the *Kormoran* would have been able to see these flags that the Germans were supposed to be flying, they would still have been told what they were to say. So, as far as that goes, anything the Germans say is under instructions. I do not think there is very much more as far as that goes. Why they were not all kept together to be saved is beyond me.

Senator SANDY MACDONALD—Can I say, Mr Ryding, what a pleasure it is to have a former member of the *Sydney* crew with us. It really is a pleasure. I hope you have many more years. You do not look your 82 years at all.

Mr Ryding—I have gone past my 'use by' date.

Senator SANDY MACDONALD—I do not know about that. There are two avenues that I wish to explore with you, but can I just make these three points? Victors obviously write history, and your comments about the *Kormoran* crew's chain of events is evidence of that. The second point is that, for one reason or another, the *Sydney* came too close to the *Kormoran*, and it is on that area that I wish to expand just a little further. The third point, it

goes without saying, I think, is that the *Sydney* crew fought valiantly until the end. They are the three overriding aspects of this whole inquiry.

As to the point that you make about collusion by the crew, I want to ask your opinion as to how that might happen on the basis that very few of the crew would understand what really went on. On the bridge, there may have been how many people on the *Kormoran*?

Mr Ryding—On the *Kormoran*?

Senator SANDY MACDONALD—Yes.

Mr Ryding—I would not have a clue.

Senator SANDY MACDONALD—But the fewer, the better, if you are going to collude a story?

Mr Ryding—The essentials. Whatever is essential because my theory is that the *Kormoran*, if I may just divert a little bit here, was built as a warship and disguised as a merchant ship. Therefore, as a warship, she would require more people on the bridge than would a normal merchant ship. A normal merchant ship, possibly at the most there would be three. Being wartime, maybe there would be an extra lookout. But your navigator would be in the vicinity, and the quartermaster, the helmsman, and presumably the captain, to see what was going on. There would not be very many on the bridge of a merchant ship, whereas on the bridge of a warship you would have quite a few extra.

Senator SANDY MACDONALD—So, when the interrogation of the *Kormoran* crew took place, there were very few really who could have given a fair and honest view of actually what happened. What I am trying to ask you about is the degree of collusion that is necessary because, of course, large conspiracies do not work. They do in theory, but somebody ultimately breaks the conspiracy and tells the truth. I am thinking that on the *Kormoran* bridge there were very few people, so the story that was struck, if there was a story struck that was not the truth, would only have had to have been held by a small number of people.

Mr Ryding—On the basis of that, definitely only a few. We can refer to one alleged report that Detmers did refer to his senior officer, or one of them, and say, 'Do we fight or do we surrender,' to which his reply was, 'We can only die once, kapitan.' I would like to know at what position were the ships when that question was asked.

To go on and talk about the bridge on the *Kormoran*, I would say that when *Sydney* hove into view, there would have been a quick discussion on the bridge of the *Kormoran* having sighted a warship. Now, they would know that with a warship—which they would readily identify as a cruiser—they could not outrun it, they could not outshoot it. The only one option was to surrender. Now, having surrendered, it would immediately be to say, 'We

will wait and see.' He would wait for his opportunity.

The rules as laid down were that, the moment a ship surrendered, *Sydney* should have broken radio silence to report all that was taking place. We do not know what signals got through and what did not. One appears to have at least surfaced that, when *Sydney* could have been asking the questions, some reply came via the Royal Navy that her quarry was a supply ship to a German raider.

I am accepting that the *Kormoran* had surrendered. In that position, *Sydney* would be required to close on the ship and board it. The position to close on a ship like that would be on the quarter. You would know what the quarter of a ship is? Now we find out that the *Kormoran* was built with underwater tubes which fired on a 45-degree angle. It was very well planned in the knowledge that had it been apprehended by a warship, as it was, the warship would be in a sitting position for those underwater tubes to be a direct hit.

We are told that *Sydney* was in the form of lowering a boat. During the course of the lowering of the boat there would have been a certain amount of observation from the bridge looking of the boat and not as much by some of the *Kormoran.* My theory is that that is the time when Detmers took one of his options and opened fire on *Sydney*.

Senator SANDY MACDONALD—You would say that the reason the *Sydney* came so close to the *Kormoran* was that the *Kormoran* had raised the white flag?

Mr Ryding—The *Kormoran* had surrendered.

Senator SANDY MACDONALD—Would there have been any other circumstances in which the *Sydney* would have come as close as it did?

Mr Ryding—To intercept a ship at sea, I have said before, no cruiser captain would come within a good vision range, which on those circumstances we are led to believe, would have been definitely no less than eight nautical miles. *Sydney* had the speed that had there been any doubt and she was a bit too close, she could have immediately altered course and scurried out. On one pre-war exercise when our aircraft was forced down off eastern Victoria, we ranged 28 knots on two boilers, which was economy speeding in those days. Had *Sydney* still been operating on economical speeding with only two boilers flashed up—that is a big 'if'- she could have still raised up to 28 knots and have turned and escaped from anything which might have looked a little bit dangerous.

ACTING CHAIR—That is why your visual range is basically the basis of the eight nautical miles in your statements?

Mr Ryding—With her armaments and everything, she would have had absolutely no reason to get any closer to a ship other than to board it, and she would only be boarding a surrendered ship. The laid down rules were that any ship which was suspect was required to

send its papers in its boat to the apprehending ship. This gets to the question: why didn't *Sydney* launch the aircraft? The aircraft was not used very often to inspect any ship. There was no reason to send the aircraft to have a look at a surrendered ship, particularly if *Sydney* had been advised that it was only a supply ship to a raider. So therefore, *Sydney* would be coming in reasonably satisfied that everything was okay. She would have been at cruising stations which means that she had two turrets forward and aft trained on the enemy ship and ready to open fire should the need be.

ACTING CHAIR—So that is why, perhaps, some of the ship's company were sighted by *Kormoran* survivors leaning on the guardrail? That is consistent with a cruising station situation.

Mr Ryding—I would have been there myself, possibly, because we would not have been at action stations; we would have only been at cruising stations.

Senator SANDY MACDONALD—Is the evidence convincing from the German crew that *Sydney* was launching a boat?

Mr Ryding—There is a report that they did see *Sydney's* aircraft ready for launching. They did sight the pilot at his controls. On the target trip, the previous trip, when I came onto the upper deck, the catapult was extended and the aircraft engine was ticking over and the moment I sighted this target I wondered why the aircraft had not been launched.

Senator SANDY MACDONALD—No. Was there a boat launched? During the German interrogation was it claimed that a boat was about to be launched?

Mr Ryding—No. The Germans reported that a boat was prepared and that it was hanging out in the davits to be launched. The report from the Germans stated that the aircraft was ready for launching.

Senator SANDY MACDONALD—Both?

ACTING CHAIR—It was turning over.

Mr Ryding—Had the aircraft been launched it would have over flown the German ship and spotted everything that it wanted and Detmers then would have known that he was no longer a surprise ship.

Senator SANDY MACDONALD—Is it fair to say that the basis of your submission is that there is no way that the *Sydney* would have come as close to the *Kormoran* as it did unless the *Kormoran* had surrendered?

Mr Ryding—I would stake everything I have got on it.

Senator SANDY MACDONALD—That is the complete basis of your statement?

Mr Ryding—That is the complete basis.

Senator SANDY MACDONALD—That is why I asked you about the number of people that would actually know what happened because the next question I have is that if the Germans were not telling the truth, how is it that they have been able to hold the story together for 57 years?

Mr Ryding—During the action, going on what information we have, *Kormoran* opened fire. She torpedoed *Sydney* and by the time the torpedos were under water she opened fire.

Senator SANDY MACDONALD—That is why the *Sydney* missed?

Mr Ryding—That is why. One solid theory is that the torpedoes hit as the *Sydney* opened fire. At that moment the *Sydney* lifted and her first salvos went over. Then with the salvos, the bridge gunnery control, et cetera, all up forward, were wiped out, we are told. That left X and Y turrets down aft, only one of which would have been manned at cruising station. Each turret had a periscope for the officer in charge of that turret to observe what took place. When an incident like that happened, the officer in that turret was in remote control. He used his periscope and then started to shoot. He watched the fall of shot. He had got no range finders, I presume. He just watched the fall of shot. He might have wanted a bit to left, a bit to right, a little bit up, or a little bit down, but he was calling the fall of shots.

In that periscope he would have seen that *Kormoran* was in a state of surrender when she opened fire. This is where my theory comes back on this. There would have been at least 100 men on *Sydney* down aft at guns crews—the lobby crews, the magazine and shell rooms crews were all scattered down aft. Medical and repair parties had not been damaged at this point in time. At least 100 men could possibly have got off the *Sydney* from down aft, let alone those who may have got off from forward.

On the *Sydney* one of the turrets down aft—whichever one was manned, probably X turret—had put the shells into the *Kormoran* on remote control into their engine room, we are told, and there were other hits. *Kormoran* could not go anywhere. She had only one engine room with big diesels, we believe. She could not go anywhere at all. She had no chance of escaping, getting back to Germany, or getting any help. She was going to abandon ship. They had time then to set their explosives and abandon ship.

If all of those men who were able were on the upper deck to abandon ship, they would all have been told the circumstances prior to opening fire and what had happened when they did open fire. They are being told that by their captain who was, we believe, a real Nazi. There was no way that any of those men were going to tell anything else. They were all national heroes. Were any of them going to admit that they opened fire with a white flag,

thereby spoiling their position as national heroes after knocking off the Australian pride of the fleet? You believe in Father Christmas if you believe that.

Senator SANDY MACDONALD—You say in your submission that Detmers was happy and surprised at not facing a court martial. If your theory is right, I am sure that is correct. What evidence do you have of his making that comment?

Mr Ryding—I have no evidence other than some of the things which I have read. I have not had access to as much as probably you people have had. For many years I had my theory typed out. The newspapers were not interested; nobody was interested. All I wanted to do was to go on record. I did intend sending a copy to the Australian war museum because I still live in the belief that possibly at least one German with a conscience will leave the full details to be published 50 years after he dies. Possibly there is at least one because I still think that some of them would not have respect for the captain who had dumped all of his wounded into a raft which was going to tip up. In his glory he jeopardised all of their lives having a go at a warship.

Senator SANDY MACDONALD—You make a very valid point about time, because people find it difficult to not tell the truth if they are asked about something after a period of time. My late father was involved in interviewing people at the end of the Second World War. If they did not believe what people were saying, they took a detailed record of the answer, locked them up again for three months and then brought them back and asked them the same questions. Of course, if you are telling the truth you give the same answer, and if you are lying you find it very hard to.

So the effluxion of time is something that is important to the story, but I keep coming back to my theory that very few people on the *Kormoran* really did know what happened. If very few people really did know what happened, the people who really wrote the history of the incident were perhaps two, three or four people who were on the bridge at the time.

Mr Ryding—I thought I had made it reasonably clear that, in my mind, they had been told what to say.

Senator SANDY MACDONALD—Can I ask two very brief questions about the life jackets that you wore and the uniforms of action stations. What sorts of life jackets were they; were they ones that blew up?

Mr Ryding—Yes, the Mae West type. It had a black cotton cover and you blew it up, presumably, when you got in the water. If you blew it up before you went into the water, you had to hold it down with your arms or otherwise it would come up and break your neck.

Senator SANDY MACDONALD—Fighting ships these days have flash jackets and all sorts of things. What did you wear at action stations?

Mr Ryding—My underpants! I was about 20 feet below in a sealed compartment and

sweating like a pig. I lost half a stone during that three-hour action. You were supposed to be properly clothed in case of flash, because the most serious injuries you could get on a warship were burns. If there had been any flash where I was, there would have been no ship, so we just stripped to the minimum and sweated everything out because that was the only way we could work. That was for three hours solid.

Mr DONDAS—What medical records of yours were kept? Were they kept by the navy?

Mr Ryding—They were kept by the navy, but unfortunately they did not have very many. When I did leave the ship and went back to depot, I found out that my trouble was that I had a very serious ulcer haemorrhage. That was instrumental in my eventually being discharged from the navy. They would not let me go to sea any further because of that. They said that food, victuals, was their main problem.

Mr DONDAS—Were dental records taken of all the seamen and personnel on board the *Sydney*?

Mr Ryding—Everybody who attended for medical treatment would have a medical record kept. But in my position, again, having the ear of the doctor down aft and having a crook back when I was on the *Sydney*, I would just comment to the doctor that my back was crook and he would say, 'When we get out of this cold weather it should improve.' Things like that did not go on record, and I had quite a battle to convince the navy of some of my disabilities after I was discharged, but it was all accepted.

Mr DONDAS—What about when you signed up?

Mr Ryding—I was 100 per cent physically—

Mr DONDAS—No, what kind of record was there? I am trying to find out whether the navy had medical records at the time of signing up and whether they may still be available in the archives.

Mr Ryding—I joined in 1935, and I was the most physically fit of those who were accepted—only three of us on that particular application. We were early post-Depression entries. You had to be 100 per cent physically fit to join when I did, and I was.

Mr DONDAS—And dental records?

Mr Ryding—My dental records were A-1, okay. I had a few little fillings which I got fixed up before I went for the examination.

Mr DONDAS—In other words, you were thoroughly examined before you signed up?

Mr Ryding—Yes, really thoroughly examined—weighed, measured and everything. One chap who was one-eighth of an inch short got in, and they expected him to grow.

ACTING CHAIR—In fact, on that point, as a result of the initial hearing we have found that the records are relatively poor. They are very mixed—both dental and medical records. We have asked the department to provide us with a cross-section of medical records so that we can get a feel for them. It is very pertinent because of the possibility of Christmas Island identification. We were told by the department—and the surgeon commodore appeared before us—that it might be quite difficult, with the limited records that they have, to specifically identify somebody. We have sought those records and they will be provided to us.

There were suggestions that there was a Japanese submarine involved and people were machine-gunned in the water. Do you have a view on that? I guess it can only be an anecdotal, private view. Could you also comment as to whether in your scenario there was any machine-gunning of any Australians by the Germans?

Mr Ryding—I believe the RAAF overflew some of the German lifeboats and, early in the peace, they did sight some machine-guns on the bows. I have a copy of that report, which came from the *Eyre Peninsula Tribune* in South Australia, of the alleged German gunner who said the Japanese submarine came and surfaced. They were all heading for shore. They heard the machine-guns or the gunfire during the night. To me, and I am only expressing my opinion, the cover-up is that it was the Japanese who machined-gunned the HMAS *Sydney* survivors, not the Germans. That is his way of saying that it was not the Germans.

ACTING CHAIR—You are saying that Mr Grossman's assertions were just a further self-defence.

Mr Ryding—Just passing the buck that the Japs did it and not the Germans.

ACTING CHAIR—And that the Japanese submarine scenario is a load of old codswallop. Is that what you are saying?

Mr Ryding—Had there been a submarine there before any engagement took place, HMAS *Sydney's* Asdic should have been able to pick up the sub, unless the sub was lying alongside *Kormoran* and would not have been reflected in the Asdic. They are things that we do not know. I cannot really pass that much comment on it because it is all hypothetical. Had there been a submarine travelling loose under its own steam, HMAS *Sydney's* Asdic definitely would have picked it up.

ACTING CHAIR—And at cruising stations, the Asdic compartment would have been—

Mr Ryding—Closed up at all times.

Senator MARGETTS—I have just one follow-up from that. Can I take it from that that you are fairly convinced that the crew were machine-gunned by some means or other?

Mr Ryding—I just feel that so much stuff floated from the HMAS *Sydney*. I have photographs showing three carley floats on the stern and on the quarterdeck. As far as my memory goes, there were at least two—one on each side—further forward. There was all this timber in the shipwrights' stack.

It depends on how much damage was done to HMAS *Sydney*. One fellow who was on the HMAS *Sydney* at the time was saying that the HMAS *Sydney* was torpedoed down aft; the magazine would have blown. With all the anti-flash gear, I would say the magazine would not have blown. If it had, there would have been so much timber and wood down after. You had all the wooden decks on the HMAS *Sydney*, right through the upper deck which was big heavy timber, all bolted down, which would have blown and scattered everywhere.

There was all the timber we salvaged from that floating target. There was all the original timber. Quite big racks of it were on the ship for what you would call shoring up. Had a shell exploded in one compartment, the bulkheads of that compartment would have been damaged. The shipwright needed all of that very heavy timber to shore up the bulkheads so that they could pump out the water and keep at least part of it secure. It came under the repair party and there was a lot of timber on that ship for that purpose.

Senator MARGETTS—There should have been no shortage of things for people to hold onto.

Mr Ryding—No shortage of stuff to have floated. You know these lifebuoys you throw for the case of man overboard? There were at least two of those that I know of down aft because I sighted one of those pre-war and a man was lost overboard from HMAS *Canberra*. That was from the four-inch gun deck. That is where your aft lifebelt crew lookout was. Those lifebelts were easily removed. They were not tied on or anything like that. They were easily removed from the bracket. At least one of those, if not both, should have floated free or been blown free. There was plenty of stuff to have floated.

When I first joined the Navy, we were always taught that the reason for the way you lashed up your hammock was because, if it was ever necessary, those hammocks would act as buoyancy floats. All up forward, from the engineers' flat further, you have got hammocks stacked on two to three decks, at least two decks, in every mess deck on that ship. Surely, if she was damaged so much, there was plenty of room for some of those to have floated out too.

You have got all the timber down aft—the wardroom officers' table, the warrant officers' table, chairs in both the officers' messes, then your captain's quarters, the commander's quarters and the engineer commander's quarters. They were all on upper deck

level and all full of timber. All the cupboards, wardrobes and you name it—desks, tables—everything was timber. There was so much stuff to float had she blown. Okay, it is the last straw that breaks the camel's back, but you would clutch at anything. A drowning man would clutch at anything. So, there was plenty of stuff they could have gathered together, anybody that got off, to hang onto.

Senator MARGETTS—Added to that, though, is there any scenario that you can think of where, for some reason, there would not have been any of the *Sydney* crew in a position to be able to get out?

Mr Ryding—I catered for that, but again, unless she was totally on fire completely along the upper deck, we do not know. We have two different reports on that. One German report states that she was on fire from stem to stern, and another one only had her on fire from the bow to midships. This again was conflicting opinions coming from the Germans. These would be not from the German bridge, but from the survivors or gunners or whoever might make a report.

Whilst we are on that report, as POWs, they did not have to say anything except name and number. They did not have to tell any story at all other than what they were told to tell. Now some of those people, the German survivors, are Australian citizens. If Australia is a good enough place for them to live in, the least they can do now is tell their stories. They are not war criminals; they did what they were told to do. They were only members of the ship the same as I was. I was not responsible for what our captain did at any time and they are not responsible for what their captain did, whether it was criminal or otherwise. And there is no reason why those Australian Germans now cannot come forward and tell the truth.

ACTING CHAIR—Did you want that to be regarded as a supplementary submission? Do you want us to officially take as evidence the notes that you have got there, or are you going to forward that to us, or what do you want to do?

Mr Ryding—Basically, that is what I did hope to say.

ACTING CHAIR—We will accept that as a supplementary submission. We will have a look at that anyhow.

Mr Ryding—As it has all been verbal, I hope that you will accept it.

ACTING CHAIR—I have a couple of final questions. Was there any anecdotal evidence on board the *Sydney* about faults in A turret? We have read a bit about this.

Mr Ryding—Yes. I have got a signed statement from the uncle of a petty officer who walked him back to the ship the night before she sailed. This gentleman spoke to me, and that is why I asked for him to give it to me in writing. When they walked back to the ship, the petty officer said, 'God help us if we run into trouble out there. Look at that. Those guns

don't bear'—or words to that effect, is his story. What it boiled down to was that the guns of A turret were not facing fore and aft as is normal when they are not being used or in port. The guns of A turret were forward ships; they were not bearing forward and aft, but looking across the ship's side.

Although there is a difference of opinion, I do know that A turret was damaged. I was aware of that at one time because something came up about supplying cordite, and they said, 'Well, you are going to work hard because A turret is not functional.' Had we been required to go into action, they did not expect A turret on that particular trip to have been operating very well. They reckoned we would be slugging our guts out keeping B turret to make up for two.

As far as I am concerned, A turret was damaged—and, again, I thought I was possibly the only person alive who knew these things and I did not say anything because I could not corroborate it. But now we have got corroborative evidence. There is a report from the log in the month prior to *Sydney*'s loss where the captain reports that A turret had been repaired.

People in my position, when there is something wrong with any part of the ship, somebody will fix it. The reason for that little commander's incident was that somebody was supposed to fix it, but that is another story.

ACTING CHAIR—My final question to you is this: should we have some sort of memorial to the *Sydney* and, if so, what would be the appropriate memorial or commemoration? Let us assume that we cannot find the ship.

Mr Ryding—I think some politician did propose a memorial for the *Sydney*, whether it be up north-west at the anticipated point where she may have gone down. But, to add a little bit to that now, with this new system where the gentleman states that he knows where they are, that he can pick it up by flying over it, if we can get somewhere near Quobba Station or in Canberra, wherever.

The *Sydney* was essentially a Western Australian ship. When the war started, as I think I said, we got to Fremantle the Sunday before the war was declared, and we took on about 100 reservists here to take us up to wartime complement, which made *Sydney* essentially a Western Australian ship. Also, in addition was the fact that we spent a lot of our wartime operating from Fremantle. There is a lot of sentiment in Western Australia, probably more so than other places maybe—except in Sydney, her namesake, where *Sydney* is really held in high regard.

If there is a memorial, I would say it could be in the vicinity of Quobba Station or Canberra and, if such is erected, I would request that those of us who regard ourselves as the *Colleoni* kids be invited to the dedication. As *Colleoni* kids, I refer to those of us who were on board when *Sydney* hit her fame in the *Colleoni* action. After that, when we returned to Sydney, each one of us was presented with the *Colleoni* medallion.

ACTING CHAIR—They were in the paymaster's cabin?

Mr Ryding—In the paymaster's safe. I did receive mine; mine was personally handed to me. If it is at all possible for those to be returned to the next of kin or to those who are still alive—and some of them are still alive in Western Australia who did not receive it—it would be wonderful. They left us in the Med to go on to England to man their Q-class destroyers; therefore, they did not return for the accolades we received on returning to Australia.

ACTING CHAIR—Thank you very much. We are very pleased—in fact, it has been an honour—to have been able to listen to you this morning. On behalf of the subcommittee, and indeed everybody, I am sure, here this morning, we wish you many years of continuing good health.

Mr Ryding—I appreciate the opportunity of being able to say what I have said. I hope it is received in the manner I hoped.

ACTING CHAIR—You heard what I had to say to the previous witness about the *Hansard* record. You will get a copy in due course. If you need to amend it, then you can amend it editorially. We wish you the best of luck. Thank you very much.

[10.49 a.m.]

EDWARDS, Mr Graham John, Trustee, HMAS *Sydney* Foundation Trust, Unit 2, 36 Henry Street, Fremantle, Western Australia

GRAHAM, Mr Edward Douglas, Vice Chairman, HMAS *Sydney* Foundation Trust, Unit 2, 36 Henry Street, Fremantle, Western Australia

HOLTHOUSE, Rear Admiral David Guy (Rtd), Vice Patron, HMAS *Sydney* Foundation Trust, Unit 2, 36 Henry Street, Fremantle, Western Australia

KIRSNER, Professor Kim, Trustee, Chair, Archive Subcommittee, HMAS *Sydney* Foundation Trust, Unit 2, 36 Henry Street, Fremantle, Western Australia

PENROSE, Associate Professor John Douglas, Trustee, HMAS *Sydney* Foundation Trust, Unit 2, 36 Henry Street, Fremantle, Western Australia

PUNCHARD, Mr Edwin Thomas Richard, Chairman, HMAS *Sydney* Foundation Trust, Unit 2, 36 Henry Street, Fremantle, Western Australia

ACTING CHAIR—Gentlemen, you were not here earlier this morning so I will repeat what I said in terms of giving evidence before this committee. We do not ask that you swear or affirm or give the appropriate oaths, but I want to remind you that these are legal proceedings of the parliament and, of course, any deliberate misleading of the subcommittee—I am sure there will not be—may be regarded as contempt of the parliament. I just put that little caveat in before I invite you to make some comments.

We have received the trust's submission and that has been authorised for publication. Are there any amendments, additions or corrections to that written submission?

Mr Punchard—There are no amendments, but we will be tabling some further material. Kim Kirsner has some material.

ACTING CHAIR—We will cover that as well. There is a submission headed *Oceanographic and cognitive issues* by Kim Kirsner and John Dunn. That will be formally received into the evidence. Would somebody like to make a short opening statement? Then, in the process, you can table the additional documentation.

Mr Punchard—On behalf of the trust, I would like to say how much we welcome the opportunity to present to this inquiry, and that we are looking forward to receiving your questions regarding the written submission and all aspects of our work. The written submission was prepared by a combination of trustees. They represent a wide variety of expertise from the academic, technical and veterans' communities. We would all be delighted to respond to your questions as appropriate.

Today we have here Professor Kim Kirsner from UWA; John Penrose from Curtin University; Ted Graham, the Vice Chairman of the trust, and vice patron Rear Admiral David Holthouse, retired, who looks after our New South Wales branch. Graham Edwards, trustee, is also here; Stephen Smith MP; Paul Filing MP; John Fiocco, who looks after our legal work, and Trevor Lloyd, who is ex-RAN.

In addition to what we said in the submission, the trust wishes to take the opportunity before the inquiry to call for the inquiry to pay particular attention to item 3 of the terms of reference—that is, the desirability and practicability of conducting a search for HMAS *Sydney*. As we come here today, we strongly urge that you endorse the trust's aim to have an effective search conducted for HMAS *Sydney*. We urge you to acknowledge that HMAS *Sydney* should be found.

I have a very personal perspective on this matter. In 1988, I was on the oil rig *Piper Alpha* in the North Sea when it blew up and killed 167 men. Only 62 of us survived. I was rescued myself from the sea and subsequently spent the next eight hours rescuing other people. I know from personal experience what it is like to face what might have been one's last moments. I spent time in the ocean, and I empathise on a very personal level with the 645 men who were lost on the *Sydney*.

After my escape, I became very much involved in campaigning over issues of offshore safety and I worked very closely with the *Piper Alpha* Widows and Families Association. I can honestly say that I have seen disaster management in action at a wide variety of levels, and I know the real importance of supporting widows and families.

After *Piper Alpha* was lost, there was the longest running public inquiry in British legal history and, by and large, the aftermath of that disaster was well managed. But, even now, after nearly 10 years, there is management activity still taking place and new issues are being dealt with still.

So a great effort was made and many lessons were learned, and whilst I accept that, because of the war, a very different imperative correctly reigned over the loss of HMAS *Sydney*, there is no doubt in my mind that, in many respects, the widows and families of those who were lost deserve more than they have received in the past. I believe that the parliamentary inquiry is the start of the process to redress this, and it is very much welcomed.

This is only the start and not the end of the process. This inquiry is in the unique position of being able to push this matter towards an effective conclusion. The conclusion will arrive when anyone would reasonably say that no stone has been left unturned. But, in our opinion as the trust, that absolutely includes the finding of the vessels.

Kim Kirsner has prepared a further submission, which I note that you have, on the work that he has in progress. I am sure that this will be addressed in your questions. This work is of real importance because it represents part of the trust's push towards reducing the

area of the search for the *Sydney*. We believe that the target area can be narrowed down and that consequently an effective and achievable search can be mounted.

This is really the nub of our position over this matter. The trust believes that it is not only of fundamental importance to our nation to find HMAS *Sydney* and to commemorate those who have been lost, but it believes that HMAS *Sydney* can be found without extraordinary expense.

Despite the sincere efforts of many individuals in the institution, until now no concerted, effective, wide-ranging and bipartisan effort has been made to deal with this matter. We do not say that this is anyone's fault; it has just never been done. What is required is an effort that is equal to the task. That is what the trust is here to promote, and that is why we shall remain in existence until the job has been done.

Finally, I would say that we believe that the expertise that is required to undertake this work exists in Australia. The appropriate equipment is routinely deployed in Australian waters by Australian companies. We would be delighted to receive your questions and assist in any way that we can.

ACTING CHAIR—Thank you very much. It is a pleasure to have you all here this morning. Can I take the opportunity to congratulate the trust in general and the membership specifically, and particularly I notice Stephen Smith and Paul Filing, our parliamentary colleagues, sitting out there as well. Can I say to you all that it was due to their efforts in the federal parliament, in conjunction with a number of us who had more than a casual interest in this issue, that got this inquiry under way.

As I indicated to the media earlier today, I think there has been lots of innuendo, lots of assertions, lots of unsubstantiated comments, lots of emotion being generated in relation to this tragedy—and there is no other word for it, it was a national tragedy. I think it behoves us all to get to the bottom of the whole issue.

I can say to you all today that it is a bipartisan issue. It is something with which we, as members of parliament at the federal level on a bipartisan unanimous basis, will attempt to turn every stone that we can to make sure that as much light is thrown on this subject as possibly can be, and to take up the principal point that you make, that is, to carry out a search. But we can develop that in the evidence. Are you going to formally table some additional documentation?

Mr Punchard—We felt that it would be important to demonstrate the level of support we have received from widows and families. There are in excess of 70 letters there.

ACTING CHAIR—For the *Hansard* record, could you formally read it into the evidence so we have it in the evidence as a written submission?

Mr Punchard—This is from the HMAS *Sydney* Foundation Trust. It is copies of letters of support received by the trust to date.

ACTING CHAIR—I open the questioning by asking—and you were not here when I asked it of the Western Australian Maritime Museum—if the MOU that exists between the trust and the museum is a public document? Could that be made available to the committee?

Mr Punchard—It certainly is a public document as anybody who wishes to have a copy can have one. I have brought one along with me today and I am quite happy to table it.

ACTING CHAIR—The second thing is in relation to the issues to be resolved. Is it reasonable to say that the principal aim of the trust is to locate the wreck or is that being too simplistic?

Mr Punchard—No, I think it is fair enough to say that that is our primary intention, but there are other related matters associated with that. The specific aims are contained in the deed of trust of the foundation. I am quite happy to make one of those available as well.

ACTING CHAIR—In the submission, you gave the tasks, achievements and plans. Is that as exists at the moment? It is 1995 to 1997, dated November 1997. I assume that that remains. Does it?

Mr Punchard—Yes, it is up to date.

Rear Adm. Holthouse—Mr Chairman, in simplistic terms your first question was whether our purpose is to find the wreck and our answer was yes. I do not think that sends the right message because it opens up other questions. Our purpose is to find the wreck in order to memorialise it.

ACTING CHAIR—That is fine. We could start off in terms of the location of the wreck. Could you outline and talk a little more about this technology with you involved in the offshore industry? You said that it was regularly available in the area? Could you talk a bit more about that and the likely order of cost of the provision of that equipment?

Mr Graham—Technology that is used in deepwater work has been developed around the resource and deepwater cable communication industry. The technology is used in various parts of the world. It is located in centres around the world where the biggest market is. In Australia that technology comes and goes as required. To give you an example, deepwater technology was here last year for a period of time and there was work done off the Western Australian coast in about 5,000 metres of water. It is fair to say that the technology is not permanently based here because the market base in Australia is too small. You are looking at equipment that is very, very expensive.

The technology is used by companies that are based in Australia. In some cases that

equipment is owned by sister companies of Australian companies. There has been some suggestion that that technology should be provided by groups like Woods Hole—I understand they were mentioned early on this morning. I would like to make the point quite clearly that Australian based companies do have access to similar technology.

We are talking in the main about what are called deepwater side scan sonar system. These are, in simplistic terms for those who are unaware of what a side scan sonar system is, a sideways looking sonar that is towed behind a vessel or hull mounted in a vessel. In deep water they are towed behind a vessel so they are closer to the bottom. They can cover a swath of the seabed, depending on the size of the object you wish to pick up, from a kilometre swath up to a 30-kilometre swath.

The size of the object that these will detect is governed by several factors: firstly, the size of the piece that you are looking for. In the case of a shipwreck, if we assume that HMAS *Sydney* blew up, it is presumably in several pieces. With the swath and the scale that the instrument is set to, you can detect objects of a reasonable size. It is a product of what is called the pixel size—the size of the picture that is returned from the side scan sonar system or the swath mapping system, as it is commonly termed. It is also governed by the speed of the vessel.

It is probably fair to say that a piece of wreckage the size of a suburban house will be picked up quite reasonably. However, I should make the point that a side scan sonar system does not identify what that object is. That object could be man-made, it could be a natural feature. It could be a volcanic plug or a shipwreck. What a side scan sonar system or a swath mapping system will do is identify a shape that looks out of the ordinary. In our submission to the inquiry, we have included some examples of shapes that have been identified and then turned out to be a shipwreck. HMAS *Australia*, off the New South Wales coast, is shown in there as an example. A freighter in 4,000 metres of water is shown.

Side scan sonar technology does not tell you that is a shipwreck. It tells you there is an object there that looks out of the ordinary. What you then need to inspect that with is something like a deepwater remotely operated vehicle or an ROV, as they are commonly termed. There are vehicles available that can work in deep water. They are fitted with a video-type camera. They are flown close to the object and, therefore, give a better indication of what that object is. I am sure that everyone has seen some of the visual film that has come back from the *Titanic*. That was presumably taken with a type of ROV. That covers in broad terms the side scan technology.

It is important that we know where the vessel is as the vessel is steaming backwards and forwards. We obviously do not wish to cover the same ground time and time again. That is controlled these days by a differential GPS—global positioning system—which provides accurate navigation. It is transmitted via satellite. In the case of Australia, it is transmitted via the INMARSAT and Optus satellites via commercial companies. That will provide you with surface navigation with an accuracy of three to five metres. What I have done is cover the

three basic tools that would be used during a search. However, further technology can be used to help determine the potential location of wrecks.

Prof. Penrose—I noticed, Ted, you mentioned radar when you meant sonar earlier on and perhaps that can be corrected. Everything that Ted says I would certainly support because we talk within the trust a good deal on this matter. There are other dimensions too. At appropriately short ranges a deep towed magnetometer will tell whether any piece of wreckage or a natural structure is or is not ferromagnetic. That is a standard technique which we did explore in the mid-1980s. I think I am right in saying that has been the only substantial search so far which used HMAS *Moresby* side scan and magnetometer work, albeit in very shallow water.

Just on the question of resolution, the resolution of side scan images is important, as is the contrast offered—as Ted has suggested—by the natural topography of the seabed. Clearly, something which is as flat as this table on some scale would show the glass very clearly. Something which was very convoluted would make the glass more difficult to pick up as a differentiated-out object. In this regard, we are monitoring cable run side scan and bathymetric swath, as it emerges, as near as we can to what we think is the appropriate area to get a feel for the level of roughness of the seabed against which any structures would have to be picked up.

I will not belabour the point too much except to say that the costs of a first broadscale search, which I think we all agree will probably inevitably involve a sonar side scan or swath type of technology, is intimately connected with reducing the initial bid of the surface area, which we all understand to be a need, and then the degree of resolution involved.

I think we are approaching the stage where, as the work done on archival work and other means helps us to narrow the area, it will be possible to define that cost more clearly than it is at the moment. As you know, we have made a first estimate of cost already in the submission and one would hope that could be refined over a period of time.

ACTING CHAIR—How often is this technology available off this coast?

Mr Graham—It is available as is commercially required. To specifically answer your question, in the last two or three years, the deep water side scan sonar systems have been in Australia about six or seven times. So they do come and go.

Prof. Penrose—I am involved in a project which will see a French vessel with something approaching the technology here in June next. I think it would be fair to say that, as Ted has suggested, the scale of involvement around the world—not only in Australia—of this sort of technology appears to be growing steadily and certainly it is around Australia.

ACTING CHAIR—It would seem that the limiting criterion is not the technology. It is the specific area of the search. What does the trust have in mind in terms of limiting the

search area or more clearly defining the search area?

Mr Punchard—Perhaps I could invite Kim Kirsner, who has currently been working around this, to speak.

Prof. Kirsner—One of the problems in drawing together the archival material is that really it has been essential to combine the oceanographic story and the archival stories, because it would be possible to develop a story which explains one set of data without the other and vice versa. For that reason, I am worried about both of these issues. Can I refer you to one of the figures you have on the submissions that I gave to Ms Towner yesterday.

ACTING CHAIR—Is it the wish of the committee that the maps be incorporated in *Hansard*? There being no objection, it is so ordered.

The maps read as follows -

Prof. Kirsner—What I am going to do firstly is simply draw your attention to the extent of convergence between the experts in oceanography. The second last figure on the penultimate page of that submission actually includes two circles which were prepared completely independently in 1991. One of those is entitled 'Hughes' and the circle around that. Sam Hughes is a senior executive with the Australian Maritime Safety Authority. He brought together a team of experts who routinely manage offshore search problems for search and rescue purposes. They are the national body of experts operating in Canberra and they coordinate and basically guide searches. I think now they are also covering aircraft searches as well as maritime, as they were then. He used their techniques and their resources to produce that predicted point—the Hughes point—and the circle of the 50-mile radius around that is also produced by them. That represents their best shot at working backwards from where the debris was actually found.

If you look at that map, most of the debris was more up towards about 24—half-way up the picture. What they were doing, in effect, was the reverse of what you normally do with search and rescue. With search and rescue, you normally say 'Here is where the pilot came out of the aircraft' and 100 hours later, you predict that they would be there. He was going backwards: 'Given that we have these bits of debris 100 or 150 miles to the north, where have they come from?' That is how he solved the problem.

Ray Steedman, which is the other circle slightly to the left and rather smaller, again between 26 and 27 degrees south, used a rather different technique. He is an oceanographer with a very considerable reputation as a scientist. Basically, he did some mathematical modelling and simulation based on their knowledge of currents and wind velocities and he produced that particular area.

What I would like to do particularly is to draw your attention to the hatched area that is the intersection between those two circles. In a sense, I see that as a kind of limiting condition. Looking at the archival data, I have at least been sensitive to that as the basic story. Part of the problem is that one has to make sense of both the oceanographic story, which is what I have been talking about, and the archival story.

In the archival story, there are about 45 different reports from different sources in the actual archival record about location. Quite a lot of those are multiple reports from the same person, so you end up with something like 15 to 20 different people giving something like 45 different bits of data. The critical three or four of those come from three or four people who were in the radio transmission section of *Kormoran*, all of whom identified the source of contact—not the actual battle, but the source of contact—as 26 111 which actually falls right on the edge of this area. They all claimed, as did many of the other survivors, including Detmers, the captain of *Kormoran*, that there was a signal from *Kormoran* at the moment of contact. They basically represented themselves as a merchantman signalling contact with a ship approaching them. That signal was picked up by two Australian sources, 101, a vessel off the coast, which had no location information, and the other was Geraldton radio where the latitude was corrupt but the longitude was not. In that report the longitude is 111 15, so it is

just slightly to the right of that line. That is actually a radio signal that was received in Australia. That is something that you would have to assume that the *Kormoran* survivors knew they had sent and many of them referred to it: 'On contact, we immediately sent a signal; we were being approached by an unnamed vessel', and so on.

That is kind of the starting point of it. In looking through the archives, one of the most interesting people in the archives is probably Bunjes, who was rather older than the rest of the survivors. He was a prize captain on board with a merchant seaman background. In fact, there are several sections in the archives where his submission is masked. They may have been removed now but, at the time, there are actually several references to that masking. Basically, as I understand it, it was probably done to protect him in some way that it is still not clear to me. But certainly, there is a suggestion there that he was giving information to the interrogators in December 1941, which they decided to actually mask from the record at that time.

One of his reports is the point of contact. He then gives particular details, but he refers to North West Cape. It was 160 miles south-west of North West Cape. If you actually plot that out, which Fugro survey have done for me, you get a silly position. But if you look at a map of Australia, and you kind of get rid of most of the noise from that map, you are left with North West Cape and not Cape Cuvier. So a very obvious possibility is that he either had a map which did not have Cape Cuvier on it or he saw that they were both there, but he picked up North West Cape, which is the bigger name or the better known name, if you like, and then basically took that as the name of the site. Bear in mind that he was talking a week later.

What I have actually done and what I am not talking about today is the detailed procedure for analysing what really amounts to eyewitness testimony. So basically it is procedure for classifying it in terms of reference and analysing in greater detail, which we are currently developing in a police context as well.

What I am suggesting here is that he made a mistake with the name when he gave his evidence a week or so later, and there are many mistakes like that through the archives—people naming Fremantle and other places like that. There are all sorts of changes in the numbers, but you can see a very consistent pattern. For example, of those 45 or so bits of evidence, some 25 named 26 111 as the point of the battle.

When you take this 160 mile south-west and make it Cape Cuvier rather than North West Cape, you end up with a spot which is on 111 15. So it actually converges very nicely. In fact, I am now on the second map over on the back page and the two points are virtually identical. So that if the actual signal to Geraldton radio is 2607 and Bunjes was actually treating it as 160 miles south-west of Cape Cuvier, those points are actually slightly less than two nautical miles apart.

My starting supposition for the analysis is that that was the point of contact and that is

supported by some 25 of the other bits of testimony all of which are talking about 26, 111. If you take it in terms of one degree squares that is the nearest point of reference. The arrow from that position down towards the 111 longitude is actually derived from Hermon Gill who wrote a detailed history in 1957. I have redone it but, basically, he took an analysis of all the survivors' testimonies about the movement of *Kormoran* from the moment of contact to the moment of battle and that gives a 19-mile move over about an hour and a half to the position that I have shown you there.

One other independent line of argument is that that is where the battle and the disembarkation from *Kormoran* took place. Quite a lot of the survivors—about seven or eight of them—also mention 120 miles off the coast. Some of them mention a variance of that: some are 20, some are 100. But, there is a lot of convergence on 120. Some of them mentioned Fremantle. Again, there is a lot of noise in there that they are not quite sure what it is they are talking about. But four or five of them, including Bunjes, were actually saying specifically 120 miles from the coast. When you move the coastal line 120 miles west, that comes right on to that position now shown as the point of battle and disembarkation.

What you have got is a convergence of two lines of evidence on each of these positions. Firstly, there is a radio signal coupled with a possible misreading of the point of reference on the coast. Then when you get to the point of the battle, there is both the 120 miles from the coast and the description of the movement of *Kormoran* after contact. What that gives you is that second position. *Kormoran* had lost power very early in the engagement. There were then perhaps as much as five or six hours of drift after that, but it is a big ship. There would not be a lot of leeway and probably not a lot of current there either, so that the area around that is guided by that being a position of the battle.

The area for *Sydney* is much bigger of course. Again, I have done an analysis of all of the statements about the movements of *Sydney*. If you plot that against time and distance—I did this in the 1997 forum—you plot a steady movement of *Sydney* away from *Kormoran* for about an hour, after which all the reports for another two hours until they lose sight of it completely, or except possibly for flame, are fairly steady. It reads very much as if it drifted off to 10, maybe 15, miles out to the south and then remained stationary after that, or drifting, of course.

What I have given you there is a very brief overview of what is a very—there is a whole lot of technology that I have developed on this problem, not specifically for *Sydney* or *Kormoran*, although that is what motivated it to a large extent, trying to use eyewitness testimony when you have got noisy data, which of course is the reality of eyewitness testimony. As our courts now know very well, the longer you go, the less accurate people get and 20 years later they might be very confident, but they will have moved a long way from the original idea.

What we have is the data which was taken about a week to two weeks later in most cases. That data converges very clearly on this general area, as does the oceanographic

analysis. To go away from those two things, you really need very good evidence. That is an overview of my analysis.

ACTING CHAIR—All right. We had a cross-section of technology. We have now got a technical assessment in definitional terms. Are you saying that that shaded intersect area is the area of highest probability? Is that what you are saying?

Prof. Kirsner—I am saying, firstly, that the shaded area is an area which the two oceanographic experts have identified as the most probable region. The second figure potentially narrows that down quite dramatically.

ACTING CHAIR—If you take figure 2, it would still put it at 26 degrees 7 minutes, 111 degrees 15 minutes which would still put it in the bottom right-hand corner of that shaded area, would it not?

Prof. Kirsner—Can I just interject briefly? The critical point is actually the point of battle and disembarkation in figure 2 which is right on 111 and I think down around about 15 or 20. Then if you go back to figure 1, you will see that that is actually very near the middle. Bear in mind that these two maps are different scales. That is very near the middle of the shaded area, in fact.

ACTING CHAIR—What does that shaded area mean in square kilometre terms?

Prof. Kirsner—What would you say—a couple of thousand square kilometres? That is my quick guess.

ACTING CHAIR—The point I am trying to get out is that it is a very big area.

Mr Punchard—Yes, that is correct.

ACTING CHAIR—What you are saying is that if you bring it back to 111 east and that battle and disembarkation position, that defines it to the point. Could we use that as the point of the datum for the search?

Prof. Kirsner—The technical answer is yes but I think one needs to be cautious. Essentially, that is defining an area which is fairly close to the *Titanic* and *Bismarck* types of areas. I am now perhaps leaning towards John Penrose or Ted Graham. A major factor in bringing the technology to bear on the search is the actual cost of getting it on site with the experts there. After that, the per day addition is relatively small so that I think one would rightly adopt a fairly conservative approach having put the technology there and one would probably go for the shaded area in figure 1, although I am making a much finer prediction than that.

ACTING CHAIR—What is the depth of water in the shaded area?

Prof. Kirsner—Approximately 2,500 metres.

ACTING CHAIR—What was the *Titanic*?

Prof. Kirsner—4,000 metres.

ACTING CHAIR—It is, technically, very feasible?

Prof. Penrose—If I could just complement Professor Kirsner's comment: the key question is can we reduce the area? There is a second line of approach which we are working on—it is still work in progress as well as this is. It has to do with the possibility—one can say no more than that—that there may still, at this late stage, be surface oil slick expressions from one or both wrecks. What we have done in order to investigate that is we have worked with several people, one of whom I know is here today and hopefully will report separately to the committee on what is possible, in the matter of detecting very thin layers of expressed oil. A reasonable question is, could there still be hydrocarbons of any kind being released at this late stage? We have managed to give some attention to two wrecks: one is the wreck of the *Royal Oak* in Scapa Flow and the second is of our own HMAS *Perth*. Both of these appear to still show oil slicks and I need to qualify that only by saying that both are in much shallower water.

ACTING CHAIR—What depth is *Perth* in Sunda Strait?

Prof. Penrose—I do not remember that figure but it is a lot shallower than this and so too is Scapa Flow. One is not saying if we can see that in Scapa Flow and in Sunda Strait we will necessarily see it here; one is saying that here we have wrecks which went down in the same sort of time frame that are still releasing oils; whether *Sydney* or *Kormoran*—either or both—are still doing this is another matter. I thought I should mention that this is an entirely independent line of approach which is being pursued at the moment. It is another arm of the attempt to reduce the search area.

ACTING CHAIR—My final question before I hand over to my colleagues is: how close to more clearly defining the problem are you in terms of area as a trust?

Mr Punchard—We are hoping by the end of this year to be much closer to the conclusion of this work. We do operate with somewhat limited resources but essentially it is the donation of the time of the trustees. I think judging on the progress of work to date that towards the end of the year we will be approaching a conclusion of this activity. I would like to emphasise that this is very much work in progress and that we are always looking for other independent avenues that can corroborate the conclusions that we are starting to draw. We do hope that towards the end of the year that we will be able to say that we are close to the final piece of our work.

Mr DONDAS—In Dr Kirsner's assessment of getting to the shaded area and taking

consideration that the *Aquitania* picked up survivors four or five days later, does all that calculation get you back to that point? The last sighting of the survivors was in the 15-kilometre radius of the battle.

Prof. Kirsner—Both the Hughes and Steedman analysis looked at all of the debris and the life rafts, life jackets and so on. Their circles are actually based on that data. I have actually done all of that independently and separately and there are a number of controversial issues in terms of the oceanography. Basically, what I think I am presenting to you is that here is the work of the two domain experts, Sam Hughes and Ray Steedman. They defined an area quite independently, in fact, using very different principles and procedures and that is the intersecting area.

The data they used was in fact the information about the *Aquitania* life raft, the *Trocas* discovery, which has actually been readjusted, probably to your knowledge, by Reg Hardstaff. In fact, the new position that he has offered actually fits this story extremely well, whereas the old position was always a problem. It also takes account of the floats and other bits of debris that were picked up somewhat later.

I have done it the other way round, I predicted forward, given assumptions about currents and so on. I did it on two of the objects and came within 10 miles each time but I am not a domain expert at that. Essentially, that is what I am doing, is giving you the Steedman and Hughes analysis, which used that data to give you those circles. Essentially, the shaded area is the area where they both say, 'This is the most probable area.'

Mr DONDAS—That is the closest we have been for over 50 years?

Prof. Kirsner—I believe so, yes.

ACTING CHAIR—Mr Punchard, in terms of the remainder of 1998 time scale, is there anything that can be done? Let us put a hypothetical situation: if the Commonwealth were to be able to provide—and this is very hypothetical—some financial resource is there any way that that could be speeded up? What is the constraining factor?

Mr Punchard—John, what would you benefit from in terms of the assistance with your area and similarly Kim what would be the things that would—

Prof. Penrose—Just going back to the oil slick issue for the moment, it remains to be seen whether that is a fruitful technique but the answer to that should be available to us fairly soon. If it is, it might well be that a comparatively modest amount of aeroplane time would be sufficient to scope the area. That would be one dimension.That would probably be handled by a local company, rather than ourselves, I would think.

I think a prudent way to go would be, first, to evaluate whether the technique looks like it is promising. I make the point that surface oil expressions are often sought for reasons

which are not to do with shipwrecks, of course. Let me say that there is a possibility in that regard. I would have to hand back to Ed or Kim in terms of work on archival material and the like.

ACTING CHAIR—In terms of that aircraft resource, is that a magnetic anomaly detection type process?

Prof. Penrose—I can comment on that a little but I am a bit hamstrung because a colleague of mine will be reporting on this, I understand, tomorrow. First, let me deal with magnetometry. Customarily, in shallow water, it is worth flying low-level magnetometry. If we are anything like right in the area and, therefore, anything like right in the water depth, it is my view that we have no chance of flying an airborne magnetometer to find the wreck in that water depth, simply because the magnetometer is too far away from the material. Whereas, in the mid-1980s, for instance, our attention was arrested by a marine magnetometer record but the water there was only 100 metres deep so that you had the opportunity to be comparatively close to the material.

Perhaps I am wrong but it is my private view that the magnetometer is not going to help us unless we tow a magnetometer deep in the ocean and that is slow.

The techniques for determining hydrocarbons come in two kinds. One is a very sophisticated technique, which is becoming available through the oil industry internationally, which uses a technique called fluorescence. Again, provided there is sufficient hydrocarbon on the surface of the water, or organics of various kinds, it causes an optical fluorescence or a fluorescence somewhere else in the electromagnetic spectrum. This is excited by a laser or similar source on a passing aircraft and detected by sensors on that aircraft.

The second approach has to do with the way in which oils of almost of any kind modulate the very small surface wave field. We all know this from when people go fishing; they put an oil slick out and you can immediately see the sheen on the water. There are all sorts of questions about how much oil and how rough the weather is on that day and the like. That is a system which can be viewed from satellite space records.

The reason I am being fairly careful about it is that, if we are right about the depth, any oil emitted is strongly dispersed by the time it reaches the surface. Nonetheless, if it happened that we found the surface expression anywhere near the sorts of evidence emerging from Professor Kirsner's work, I think that would be very powerful evidence that at least a search in that area was warranted.

My immediate answer to the question, and there may well be other answers, is that, subject to a certain proving out of where we are at the moment, resources put into one or other form of searching for a slick may prove useful. We should be in a position to provide guidance on that fairly soon.

ACTING CHAIR—Are you saying that that could quickly dismiss the carbon presence argument and go more for the subsurface approach?

Prof. Penrose—I do not understand the question.

ACTING CHAIR—Are you saying that if you have the aircraft search and the aircraft search is able to discount the presence of residual carbon in the water that that lends the argument to putting the emphasis subsurface?

Prof. Penrose—Let me be clear. First, we should use the term 'hydrocarbons' because carbon comes in other forms which would not be particularly helpful. I see it in the following way: either there is a surface hydrocarbon expression of sufficient strength to be detected or there is not. There might not be one simply because either the dispersion is so great from the depth or that in fact both of the ships are not like the *Royal Oak* and HMAS *Perth* and are not exuding hydrocarbons. But let us take the positive spin on this. If we find a quasi-stationary expression of hydrocarbons on the surface there are two main sources, one is natural seepage, which of course would be of interest in oil exploration terms, and the second is that either these or some other shipwreck is emitting oils. That is the best answer I can give to that question.

Mr Punchard—Perhaps I could come back to you with an immediate response. As I have already stated the trust simply suffers from a lack of resource and the fact that we rely on voluntary time. I know that for archival work some additional funding for Kim would be of great benefit because a researcher and a coordinator could be employed, which would speed up that process. Similarly, a sum of money that could be applied to remote sensing of a variety of types, aircraft and satellite, and some simple assistance with coordination within the trust for secretarial support would be of benefit. We could supply some figures for that.

ACTING CHAIR—Could you take that on notice and give us some supplementary comments in writing.

Mr Punchard—Absolutely.

Senator SANDY MACDONALD—I have some questions for a number of the members of the trust. The first is to Mr Penrose. I am not a scientist but would both the *Sydney* and *Kormoran* seep hydrocarbons? I have it at the back of my mind that the *Kormoran* was powered by electric-coal or diesel-electric.

Prof. Penrose—Obviously it is much better if you have got large amounts of bunker oil but almost any ship or vessel contains vast amounts of lubricants and oils of various kinds. Clearly, it is better if it is bunker oil as there is more of a source. Against that let me say that if major explosions did occur, as we are led to consider were certainly possible, it is not impossible that major bunker fuel locations within the vessel or indeed any other hydrocarbons would have been in part destroyed. But I consider it very unlikely that all

possible hydrocarbons would have been consumed. That would be a most unusual wreck.

Senator SANDY MACDONALD—Professor Kirsner, on your contact positions, figure 2, is your description of battle and disembarkation position that of the battle position and the disembarkation from the *Kormoran*?

Prof. Kirsner—Yes, that is right.

Senator SANDY MACDONALD—You have said that the depth was 2,500 metres—that is about half the depth of where the *Titanic* was discovered—and that the 15 nautical mile radius is a similar geographic research area to the *Titanic*. Is that correct?

Prof. Kirsner—The smaller of those two circles on that second figure—the five nautical miles one—is probably similar to that of the *Titanic* and *Bismarck*. The larger radius, which is allowing for the fact that the information on *Sydney* is much weaker, is certainly bigger than *Titanic* and *Bismarck.*

Senator SANDY MACDONALD—What is the coverage of the side scan sonar?

Prof. Penrose—The question is a good and proper one, and it has to do with the issue that Ted Graham raised: the coverage at appropriate resolution. I might hand back to Ted on that because, of the two of us, he has probably had the most experience with using side scan.

Senator SANDY MACDONALD—I want to narrow it down. In your submission you talk about the cost of $3.3 million to $5 million, and I am just trying to identify that that narrow area of five nautical miles is the area that you propose to search if you had a $3.3 million to $5 million budget.

Mr Graham—We have not put a cost analysis into the very recent work that Dr Kirsner has just finished, so I do not think we are in a position to specifically answer that. If you would like us to specifically answer it, we can in a separate submission.

ACTING CHAIR—I think we should.

Mr Punchard—If I may interject, I think it is fairer to say that we would be able to search a considerably larger area than that small circle for that sum of money.

Senator SANDY MACDONALD—In your submission you talked about $3.3 million to $5 million, but if the chairman would agree, I think it would be very helpful.

ACTING CHAIR—Could you take that on notice, please?

Mr Graham—Okay.

Mr DONDAS—Can that equipment be hired or rented, or do you have to buy it?

Mr Graham—No, the equipment is available commercially.

Mr DONDAS—For rent?

Mr Graham—No, for hire. There are a whole series of questions. It needs a suitable vessel to work from but, yes, the equipment is available commercially and there are vessels on the Australian coast either now or from time to time that are quite capable of deploying that equipment.

ACTING CHAIR—The *Moresby* is now paid off, isn't it?

Mr Graham—Yes.

ACTING CHAIR—Is the side scanner in *Moresby* of sufficient—

Mr Graham—No.

ACTING CHAIR—No, I would not have thought so.

Rear Adm. Holthouse—I think you would subcontract or contract this work to the operator and manage it from here.

Prof. Penrose—I wonder if I might add to this comment. It strikes me that a dimension of a search, should it occur, that I feel would be valuable and that the committee might like to take on board, is the extent to which we could in some way build capacity in Australia. Let us say that if a search is finally warranted and funded—and I appreciate that we have not reached that point, but if it were—then there would need to be significant expenditure on resources. I, for one, would like to see two things happen: at least close attention given to what capacity building in Australia might arise from it; and, secondly, the extent to which we could involve young Australians. I have in mind 20-year-olds rather than 15-year-olds, but young people somewhat similar to the people who were on the ship at the time.

One final thing, while I have the floor, is that a different sort of vessel is commonly used for, say, towing a side scan. *Moresby* would have been good for that, as it was when it was used to carry an EGG100 shallow water side scan on board. But once a site is covered or recovered or there are several sites that are worthy of attention by an ROV, it is quite possible that you would wish to deploy a different sort of vessel. That vessel would need to be able to hold position, for one thing. It would need to be able to dynamically hold position in the deep ocean—you obviously cannot anchor comfortably in 2½ kilometres of water—and so the chances are that it would be a staged process.

ACTING CHAIR—I am sure industry comes into it.

Mr Punchard—I have been led to understand that vessels of that capacity are in the process of being acquired by the Australian navy, which are actually ex-North Sea dynamically positioned vessels. One of the considerations that we have always had is that the funding of this enterprise may well combine a combination of resources. It may be that if somebody—either a commercial organisation or, indeed, the navy, if they had such a vessel—was able to donate the services of that vessel, it might be possible to get the fuel for that all in the form of sponsorship from a commercial organisation.

Similarly, we might be able to get some consideration around the hire of some of this equipment in view of the nature of the work and so on. I say this because it may be that we do not simply have to go out and get a straight cash amount to get this work done.

ACTING CHAIR—Would it be fair to say that the major criticism at this point would be a lack of coordination? In other words, the trust is doing its great work independently, and this committee is having a hearing into all dimensions of it, but there does not seem—to me, anyhow—to be any sort of central coordinating mechanism.

Mr Punchard—This reflects on why the trust was set up, because this matter covers areas that have never really been covered by one organisation. It partly involves activity which is within the realm of a museum; it partly involves activity in the realm of the war memorial; and it partly covers straight off-shore industry material. The thinking behind the trust was to gather together a combination of representatives from those environments and expertise from those environments so that we could actually get the job done. In that sense, yes, there has been a lack of coordination. We do not have any doubt that with the group of people that we have gathered together within the trust that we can do that: the problem we have is one of resource.

ACTING CHAIR—I am thinking aloud here: in the commercial sector, would it be a feasible for some sort of R&D project to be done in conjunction with off-shore industry, at the same time—to do what we are sitting here talking about?

Mr Graham—John Penrose may be a better person to carry on the conversation.

Prof. Penrose—Perhaps I might come in at that point. I run what is called the underwater vehicle program of the Australian Maritime Engineering Cooperative Research Centre. So far, I have not brought this project into the work of the CRC. It seemed to me that it was premature to do so until, and if, the work of this committee of inquiry was complete. I suppose that I am amongst those who will rest very much on the decisions that come from the parliamentary inquiry. Provided that a search ends up being considered and approved, and provided in particular that we then have a well-developed program with a good deal of cooperation from all the people who have contributed to this inquiry, it would be possible at least to go through that mechanism, through the CRC, and ask if the technology dimension

could be adopted in part through that CRC.

ACTING CHAIR—So an appropriate vehicle is the CRC.

Prof. Penrose—It is an appropriate vehicle because, again, it is a national enterprise. It involves about 30 companies and four universities across Australia.

Senator SANDY MACDONALD—I have some disjointed questions, I admit, but time is pressing. What are the financial resources of the trust? How successful have you been in raising donations, and are those donations tax deductible?

Mr Punchard—The financial resources of the trust are extremely limited. We have received some very kind donations—quite a large number from relatives—but they all tend to be small. Probably less than $2,000 is what we have received in total. The work of the trust has been done entirely by the donation of time and resources by trustees and companies associated with the trustees. I regret that I am unclear as to the precise taxation arrangements around the trust.

Senator SANDY MACDONALD—Could you check on that?

Mr Punchard—I am informed that the trust has been set up as a charitable trust.

Senator SANDY MACDONALD—One of the primary objectives of the trust has been to encourage this parliamentary inquiry. What do you hope for this parliamentary inquiry to find or to recommend?

Mr Punchard—First and foremost we seek the endorsement of the inquiry that a search should take place and we would very much like the inquiry's support for our activity. Ultimately, the major problem that we feel we are faced with is a financial one. We feel that, within Australia and within the web of contacts that we have brought together within the trust, we have the capacity to get the job done. The thing that holds us back is, quite simply, resource. If, at some stage, the government would be prepared to participate in some way in resourcing the activity that is required to get this job done, of course we would be delighted to receive it.

Senator SANDY MACDONALD—Is it fair to say that the setting up of the inquiry has reinvigorated you, through Dr Kirsner's latest research? Is that something that has happened in the last little while, in the past two or three months?

Mr Punchard—No. I would say all the activity that the trust has undertaken is activity that we would have undertaken anyway. We were delighted that the work of Stephen Smith and Paul Filing resulted in the parliamentary inquiry and we believe that it has been extremely useful in drawing attention to a matter which seems largely to be forgotten. I make the point that the trust is here to stay. We will remain active until we have ultimately

achieved our aims, which are very much to find the vessels but also to ensure that there has been an effective commemoration. Listed in our trust deed, for example, is the desire to charter a vessel—once the site has been found—to take relatives and family members out to the site for a service of commemoration, and ultimately to participate in enduring forms of commemoration of one form or another.

Senator SANDY MACDONALD—Your main aim or collateral main aim is to find the wreck and then to commemorate those lost. What do you propose, in order to commemorate those lost? Also, do you have any theories about what happened to the *Sydney*?

Mr Punchard—I will answer your final question first. I decided some time ago that the best thing to do was to actually not have any theories about what happened to HMAS *Sydney*. I do not think that, in a sense, it is necessarily relevant to our activity. Others may think differently about that.

In terms of commemoration, I will mention once again that we have a very specific aim with chartering a vessel, but we are already really well advanced in formulating an idea for a commemoration on the Internet, which we refer to in the written submission as a virtual memorial. I might just invite Kim Kirsner—who, once again, has been very strongly involved in that activity—to refer to that.

Senator SANDY MACDONALD—Before you do that, I understand that there is no particular memorial to the *Sydney*.

Mr Punchard—There is the mast of HMAS *Sydney* at one at the heads.

Senator SANDY MACDONALD—Yes, but that is of the World War I *Sydney*, the first one.

Rear Adm. Holthouse—The mast in Sydney is not a memorial to anything other than to the navy. It was a private donation in the first place. There is a memorial on Quobba station at Carnarvon, and there are, no doubt, other smaller ones in local centres around Australia. The key one, and the one that is used to commemorate the event most regularly, is the one on Quobba station.

There are, no doubt, better answers to that question, but can I go back to one or two earlier questions, please, and to yours, Chairman? The effect of this parliamentary inquiry, in my opinion, has been substantial. I was asked to join recently, as vice-patron, with a view to furthering the trust's ends in the eastern states. My first concern was, 'Where is it going? How can it survive without official support?' That is the purpose, as I see it, of our submission to you. Without your support, we have a serious problem because there are costs and there is that issue of organisation that the chairman drew attention to.

That is not to say that the trust would not survive. As our president says, it

undoubtedly would. But I have to question whether it would achieve our objectives—which are those referred matters 3 and 6 that you have in front of you—without, firstly, your interest and, secondly, the parliament's support and some form of government financial as well as moral support. Whether we go for public subscription is very much related to answers to those questions. Clearly, as we all know, times are tough. If we go for corporate and public subscription, we need to be credible. We are talking about a substantial sum of money. In my view, the only really sensible source for that on a national basis is the national parliament.

We do have expressions of support from the parliament of New South Wales and the City of Sydney. I would be very surprised if both of them were not very much onside when the time comes. But there has to be an initial major step and I think it is only through your good offices that that is going to be achieved.

Senator SANDY MACDONALD—I would just make one final comment on that. I think the actual costing and, within your resources, the technical development for Dr Kirsner's proposed limited search area and the costing involved in that would be very helpful to the committee. Secondly, because you are an extremely reputable representative group that is involved, I think that we as a committee would be very keen to hear of what commemoration proposals you might have as well. We would like to consider both of those things.

Rear Adm. Holthouse—Senator, we might go into that separately and have time to put some words to you in the form of a supplementary submission. But we have, as I understand it, said all along that the purpose is to identify the ship, fill the void in the hearts of the families that have suffered the lack of knowing for decades, to ensure by making this an official national search that that site becomes a memorial in perpetuity. It is not a diving site. It is not a thrill seeker site or any of those things. It is protected because it is a national venture that we are engaged upon.

Secondly, this notion of a virtual memorial is a very attractive one because it is there for all time. It records the names and the histories of all the families, all of the members of the ship's company that were lost and so on. It is a very human interest site, one people can visit regularly from all around the world. Those are two very practical things, in our view. On the question of a physical memorial, one would imagine that in due time, with more attention given to the matter, that that memorial at Shark Bay at Quobba Station would be a very good basis.

ACTING CHAIR—On the question of the search and then the commemoration, what is the trust view somewhere in between? If you are working towards a memorial or commemorative aspect of it, is it feasible that some sort of scientific assessment is done as to what happened—in other words, to have a look at the wreck, using remote vehicles or submarines or whatever? The trust would not want to be excluded from that as well.

Mr Punchard—No, indeed. We would like very much to be directly involved with that. It is with that very much in mind that we have developed the close relationship that we have with the Western Australian Maritime Museum, given their responsibilities under the Historic Shipwrecks Act. It was also with that in mind that we have developed the memorandum of understanding. It is something that we appreciate needs to be planned effectively before we go out there with a deepwater remote vehicle. The site, in my opinion and in the trust's opinion, should be effectively surveyed. It should be done with proper archaeological practice. It should be reported, so a full scientific activity should take place. Obviously, we would want representatives of perhaps the War Memorial to be present as well.

ACTING CHAIR—Would it not be a reasonable summary to say that the trust has that three-dimensional approach?

Mr Punchard—Absolutely. Whilst I might personally withhold any opinion of what happened in the engagement, there is no question in my mind—I am a qualified maritime archaeologist and did study at the Western Australian Maritime Museum—that part of the process of leaving no stone unturned is to ensure that both sides are very effectively surveyed because they may, although there is no guarantee, in some way be able to inform on what happened during the engagement. It is very valuable in that sense.

Senator MARGETTS—Mr Punchard indicated that he did not want to have an opinion about what happened. It would be true to say that the national, and in some ways international, interest in the sinking of the HMAS *Sydney* is not focused simply on its location. People obviously want to solve the mystery of what happened in that instance. Finding the HMAS *Sydney* would be a big step, but how could finding the HMAS *Sydney* in any way close that book?

Mr Punchard—The only way that it can close the book is to say that it is an activity which has been done. In terms of what happened during the engagement, once a substantial survey has taken place, then at least it can be said that the vessels have been found and surveyed. In that sense, every effort has been made to add to the body of evidence.

Senator MARGETTS—Isn't it the case that there are those amongst your foundation who wish that the finding of the HMAS *Sydney* be the means of closing the book?

Mr Punchard—There is no question that all the trustees would like to see the widows and families get the maximum sense that everything has been done. There is a fundamental problem with this matter—that is, the ultimate likelihood is that you will never know exactly what occurred during the engagement. That is the reality of the matter. But at least, if the vessels have been found and thoroughly surveyed, you can then at that stage say that everything has been done.

Rear Adm. Holthouse—Our chief interests are your matters for referral: Nos, 3 and

6. We are very conscious that you will be addressing those other issues, including questions of no doubt blame, but also involvement by other nations and other platforms. We do not believe that those are issues for us because our appeal is to the people as a whole and is non-factional in that regard. We have our own views. They may or may not be of interest to you. There are others who have made submissions to you, and will continue to do so throughout this inquiry, who would come from a different position from ours.

To be a little more specific, it goes without saying that we will never know what was in the minds of the command of HMAS *Sydney* at the time. We might discover that the hull suffered some forms of damage which we do not know about. For example, if there was an indication that she had blown up, that would be of interest. That is not information that we have at the moment. The last reporting sighting was of a flare, but essentially the ship continued to drift on fire. We do not know what her end was, but finding her might throw some very important light on that, if she had blown up.

If her wreck is found in a place which logically supports that search, then that is important information—not to us, but to some of those other people who have different interests from ours, but nonetheless important ones. I think there are issues that come out of finding her that would go some way to addressing all of those wounds—national and international—but our particular interest is to find the ship and ensure that she is protected as a war grave.

ACTING CHAIR—That reinforces what the Chairman had to say before about the three dimensional approach. That is what I was trying to get to. If the wreck is found, and if there is evidence, for example, that the ship blew up or something happened, it would not throw light on tactically what had happened but it would at least give some idea of what happened to the ship and why she sank.

Mr Punchard—Could I possibly invite Graham Edwards to come forward to speak to this matter with specific regard to the notion of closing the book?

ACTING CHAIR—Could I say that I am going to let this run on a little because this is absolutely critical evidence that we have to take. I am going to let it run on for a little while and, if need be, we will just push the program on by a few minutes this afternoon.

Mr Edwards—Thank you for the invitation to briefly add some matters which go to the heart of why we would like to find the *Sydney*. In response to the questions from Senator Macdonald and from Senator Margetts, I guess one of the things that we should be trying to do is to ensure that—as we move towards the new century and as we move towards the holding of, for instance, the Sydney games—we do something as a nation, particularly as a flow-on from the year that we recently celebrated, 'Australia Remembers', to ensure that we leave no stone unturned—I think were the words used by our Chairman—when it comes to trying to find the *Sydney*. Those men who lost their lives on *Sydney* deserve no less and, indeed, it is my view that, if nothing else, they should be comforted by the fact that we, as a

nation, have done everything we could do to search for them, to find them. All we can do now is to spiritually bring them home, but we should do that.

As we are talking about resources and the cost, what is $5 million in terms of finding the ship and, as I said, spiritually bringing those people home? If we look at the cost of the hosting of the Sydney Olympics, it must be going to cost this nation many, many millions of dollars. The question has to be posed in this context: do we care enough, as a nation, to search for the *Sydney* and to do everything we can to find the ship and, as I said, to spiritually bring those people home?

Senator MARGETTS—One of my reasons for asking was to follow on in relation to archives. Their submission mentioned that Prof. Kirsner conducted an archival search in the United States, Britain and Australia which did not yield new information as to the precise location of the vessels, nor any suggestions that such information existed.

One of the themes of the information we have been given so far, and Mr Taylor's media release mentioned that the hearing we had in Canberra probably posed more questions than it answered. There is a feeling that there is signals information which never made it to the archives. It is suggested that some of these are not only about the location but are about the activities leading to and from and information and messages that came before and after the engagement.

In your indication that no new information might exist by your narrow focus, you might be saying you believe there is no new information in the archives that might help on location, but perhaps there is non-archived information that might help on signals or actions in trying to solve the mystery.

Prof. Kirsner—Yes, you are right. I think my focus in looking through the archive material primarily was to look in terms of the location question rather than other issues that were sitting there. However, you cannot go through an archive so narrowly. So there is a lot of information there.

One of the issues that I think it brought home to me relates to a lot of recent research in Holland about maritime disasters. They have done a lot of systematic analyses concerning the level at which you have to look to find the cause of a particular disaster—and this may well be an issue in the *Piper Alpha* problem as well. Historically, in terms of these disasters—and these were all civilian ones that they were looking at—there was a tendency to immediately dismiss the problem as being a low level mistake made by a junior employee in some technical sense on the spot who pressed the wrong switch or made a mistake. The analyses generally show for these sorts of problems—and they are mainly civilian ones—that it is design philosophy or the organisational issues which played a major role in contributing to the actual disaster.

So it is partly with that background that I was very interested to read how much

material was out there on the instructions that were available to cruiser captains at that time. It is fairly clear from that material that they were put in something of a position of conflict. On the one hand, they had to protect their ship as their prime responsibility—and I am perhaps infringing on other people's areas of expertise here—but, on the other hand, there was also an expectation that when the opportunity arose they would capture any non-armed auxiliary vessels that might be carrying material to Germany. In that sense, there was a conflict in the instructions coming to these people from their two responsibilities in this setting.

From where I am sitting—and this is perhaps more personal and less trust—the problems do fit into that context. I think there are some very interesting issues at that level to be unearthed.

I have another thought following on part of your question. The use of remote memory is a very dangerous area for many reasons. Memory is my area of prime interest. There is a great volume of data showing how unreliable memory is over a long period of time. For example, in the legal context, what tends to happen is that, the greater the interval, the less the preservation of the actual details of what happened, and the greater the shift towards building a model, a mental picture, of what you think would have happened. There are huge volumes of data supporting that sort of line.

For example, again in Holland, there was an El Al crash over Amsterdam some years ago. There were some interviews conducted after that crash with people who had not seen the crash but who gave details about the crash as they understood it. The last question they were asked was, 'Did you see the video of the crash?' Sixty per cent of them said, 'Yes,' but the problem was that there was no video. So, simply from reading the material and thinking through what had happened, they had formed a picture and that became real to them.

A somewhat similar thing happened with the John Dean material on Watergate. Dean gave extremely detailed reports of who had been at each meeting and the cover-up; what they had said; what their evidence was and so on—and particularly what John Dean had said, but also what Richard Nixon had said and so on. Later on the tapes became available. When you match the tapes against John Dean's testimony, in the detail he was virtually wrong everywhere. The dates were wrong; the people at the meetings were wrong; what they said and the paraphrases and the quotes were wrong. But on the gist, he was right—there had been a cover-up.

Again, when it comes to fine grain details of what has happened, memories from even a year ago are not particularly good; memories from 50 years ago need to be treated with great caution. On the other hand, oral history as providing an impression of what it was like to be there and what people thought and felt about the event is a different issue, and I think it has a most appropriate place in the record. As a method of adjudicating on fine grain issues, it can be very difficult.

Senator MARGETTS—Yes, but part of what we have been told is not necessarily relying on what people's first-hand or second-hand memory is. It is that there might be, potentially, signals that never made it into the archives. These are not relying on people's memories.

Prof. Kirsner—I agree with you that might be the case. In terms of my Australian searches in London and Washington I may have covered 70 per cent of the publicly accessible archives. The scale of material outside the archives is unknowable. I do not think any sum of money would guarantee that you explored every possible corner, so one has to be open about that question.

Mr DONDAS—It is early days for the hearings. Let us assume that after the hearings the committee makes a recommendation in its report that funding be made available to the HMAS *Sydney* Foundation Trust. Do you think that you would be able to provide the committee with a breakdown of the funding required between $3 million and $5 million: how you see it being spent and for what purpose? Do you think there may be other competing organisations who may also have some assumption that they should be able to get funding to carry out further research on the sinking of the HMAS *Sydney*?

Mr Punchard—First of all, there is absolutely no problem providing a detailed breakdown of all of our funding requirements and, in particular, making it clear that when we talk about the $3 to $5 million worth of funding we are actually talking about covering a research area which is most substantial. I really want to make that very, very clear as it did come up earlier.

Mr DONDAS—Could we have option A, option B and option C?

Mr Punchard—Absolutely. Bearing in mind that a large part of the cost involved in a survey is the mobilisation cost, that equipment can be brought into this country at virtually any stage, subject to its availability. One of the things that we have always sought to do is to try and defer some of the mobilisation costs by picking them up at the end of a contract that has just been completed.

In terms of any other organisation that may wish to be considered for funding, I am certainly not aware of any organisation as extensive as ours operating in this area. Equally, I would not want to say that there are not other individuals who have not done some sincere work here. If they feel they should make an application for funding, then I say that they should do that. Certainly, to my knowledge, there is no other organisation which has the diversity and capacity of ours.

ACTING CHAIR—We would be interested if any of you have a final comment. I could not let the opportunity go past without bearing in mind I have a retired admiral who may or may not want to make a comment in a private capacity rather than as a member of a trust.

First of all, there has been some criticism. Some of those who are here today would be critical of what Navy had not done and have some sort of conspiracy theories about undue secrecy. Admiral Holthouse, would you in a private capacity make a comment about what Navy has done in relation to this, both in contemporary and in historical terms? Secondly, we had some interesting evidence this morning from Mr Ryding—and I do not think you were here to hear that—that was very illuminating, albeit a personal view as to what happened. Does Admiral Holthouse have a view as to why the HMAS *Sydney* got itself in a situation that it did?

Rear Adm. Holthouse—Thank you, Chairman. You must have owed me one. It might help to get my mind around that first and difficult question if I answer the second one first. My views are drawn purely from reading books—Detmers' book, Frame's book and others. As you imply, I come from some 43 years in the Navy. I have seen battle damage at sea and been part of it, and I have seen fire at sea and flood at sea, so I have an empathy with those stories.

Firstly, it was a fierce fight and both ships were sunk. I think that is a very important point to make. We tend to say that HMAS *Sydney* was beaten. I suppose she was. Her fire control systems ought to have been better and, I suppose, her firepower was better in some senses, but she was sunk. But so was *Kormoran*.

Kormoran was armed with guns of a similar calibre to those of HMAS *Sydney*. She had torpedoes which were more amenable to use than those in HMAS *Sydney*. Some of them were submerged. She knew what she had to do and HMAS *Sydney* was trying to find out. She had considerable advantage in terms of the principle of war called surprise and she was sunk. I would just say that HMAS *Sydney* did not do too badly and her ship's company deserve the praise and the memorialisation that we are trying to achieve for them.

HMAS *Sydney* was badly damaged. It was a fierce fight. I read in one account that some 600 rounds of almost six-inch ammunition were fired by *Kormoran*—most of it at very close range, so it struck its target. HMAS *Sydney* was badly shot up. *Kormoran's* anti-aircraft weapons were used throughout the engagement. It is not surprising that *Sydney's* superstructure and anything on it was badly peppered. We had a very short fierce fight. Obviously once the engagement took place, both ships discharged their duties extremely well.

My personal view—and it is only that and not based on the historical research that others have made and certainly not on first-hand research—is that there was no third party involved. It was a fight between two opponents in the circumstances that we all know about. Frankly I am not concerned with why it took the course that it did. I am concerned with the brave men who went with her and fought to the end. Let us face it: there was a torpedo salvo fired very late in the engagement from that disabled cruiser and X or Y turret—I forget which—was firing very late in that engagement from a very badly disabled cruiser. It makes you weep.

Personally, I do not have any views that there was a third party. We do not know what was in the minds of those on the bridge of HMAS *Sydney*. We do know that both ships discharged their duty extremely well. It is a mystery. The mystery for me is why we never found anything. I think finding the wreck will help us understand why and how that happened.

There are other things. This in a sense bears on your first question. We were at war and there were all kinds of rules about secrecy and radio silence and so forth. The risks that were on that convoy route were well known. That is why the cruiser was there; that is why the convoys were escorted. The ships were escorted up into the region throughout the passage. There was danger; there were risks; there were rules imposed on radio silence and so forth. As a result there was a delay between the engagement and the search. It was war time.

We were a fairly small navy—witness the ranks of the people involved in navy office and elsewhere. We were a small navy and not a top-heavy one, with Japan coming into the war very soon afterwards. That she would do so seemed very much in many minds. The fact that we are unable now to trace all of the correspondence written at the time—the commentaries and comments and reports and all of the signals that Senator Margetts mentioned—does not surprise me. It certainly does not leave me with a sense of conspiracy or cover-up.

A lot has been said about the background to the event—the strictures that were imposed, if you will, on command in the use of its ammunition and the conservation of ammunition in circumstances where there was no certainty about the nature of the possible target. Those sorts of issues were out there, and were bound to have been. Look at what Detmers had to do in order to keep his ship fuelled. There was no fleet train available to him, and none available to us. The technology had not been developed sufficiently at that time. Ships had to conserve their resources.

There were all kinds of justifications and rules and regulations of that nature, and there was urgency. And then the Japanese came in, and I suspect that records were lost by the normal processes of bad office management. I do not for one moment believe that there was then no more than a requirement for wartime secrecy provisions to restrict the information that was released. Since then, I do not believe there has been any attempt other than to explore the records completely and to make that information available. I do not speak with authority. My responsibilities in the Navy have not included either of those. That is my view as a reasonably experienced naval officer, both in the field and in head office.

I believe the Navy has nothing to hide. I believe that the Department of Defence has nothing that it would wish to hide at this time. I am content to believe that there were errors made in record keeping and the like at the time. But I am convinced that it is in everybody's interest, in Canberra as elsewhere, to unearth any information that is available and to make it available to your inquiry. The fact that you are having this inquiry I think is wonderful because perhaps some of these doubts that people have not been able to clear up will be

cleared up. There are others who will not be satisfied until the ship is found.

Can I just conclude by saying where I come from on this issue? I suspect like you, I was in favour of leaving those brave men asleep in Drake's hammock, if you will, and I felt that way until quite recently when I became conscious of the trust's existence. Some books have been written in recent times, in the 1980s particularly, and they have tended to fan the flames of controversy. Those men are not going to sleep in their hammocks until this issue has been resolved. Australians challenged by a challenge are going to address it and will continue to address it until it is resolved. They are going to pursue that mystery until it is cleared up because that is the kind of people we are. I think it is in all of our interests, as well as the interests of the living, surviving members of those families, to fill the voids in their lives.

ACTING CHAIR—Thank you. That is very helpful evidence. I have to say that is very consistent with my views as well. The reason I asked the first question was that it was very clear from our initial hearing—and we can all be wise in hindsight, and you and I are more contemporary naval officers—that to command and control in contemporary terms we were an outpost of empire, we really just did not exist. In many ways, a lot of what has happened is a result of just that. The delay in the search that was involved for all of these papers that we have got and the differing attitudes that people have of these things are all dimensions of this lack of a command and control arrangement which we certainly have in a contemporary Defence Force situation. That was the reason for my asking that question.

Rear Adm. Holthouse—It is absolutely right. When you think that the rear admiral commanding the Australian squadron came across to Perth to participate in some of the interviews of the German prisoners, whereas today he would be in his command and control centre watching not just the local battle but the whole war, then we are talking light years in terms of command and control. We need to keep that in mind when making judgments.

ACTING CHAIR—Thank you. Are there any final comments from the trust? I think this has been very helpful evidence indeed, and we do thank you for it.

Mr Edwards—I have a brief comment, and it is this: we, as a nation, do have the resource to search for the *Sydney* and we do, as a nation, have the capacity to search for the *Sydney*. The question I would ask your subcommittee to focus on is whether or not we, as a nation, care enough to search for the *Sydney*. You, Mr Chairman, and your subcommittee, are in the best position, on behalf of all Australians, to answer that question. I simply hope that you will ponder that question and that your answer will be in the affirmative and, if it is, I simply ask that you endorse the work of the trust.

ACTING CHAIR—Thank you very much. This is a comment I made last evening, and later in the day I will release it to the media. Just to reinforce what you have said, I said that submissions to the parliamentary inquiry have raised a wide cross-section of views and emotions. Undoubtedly, the Perth segment will reignite the various theories as to what

happened on that fateful day in November 1941. Then I went on to say that both the general public and the families of those lost deserve nothing less after half a century of confusion, of uncertainty and of innuendo. Parliamentary colleagues right across the political spectrum are determined to leave no stone unturned in this inquiry. I just say again that we will not do that, and that there will be no stone left unturned.

Mr Edwards—I compliment you on your remarks, and on the way you have conducted the deliberations this morning.

ACTING CHAIR—Thank you very much for your evidence. The *Hansard* record will be made available in due course and, of course, you have every right to amend editorially as you see fit. We look forward to further discussions and to receiving the information on notice from you. Thank you.

Proceedings suspended from 12.32 p.m. to 1.35 p.m.

McDONALD, Mrs Glenys Eileen

ACTING CHAIR—Welcome. Do you have any comments to make on the capacity in which you appear?

Mrs McDonald—I am an independent researcher into the loss of HMAS *Sydney*.

ACTING CHAIR—Thank you. You heard what I had to say this morning about these being legal proceedings of the parliament so I will not repeat those. We have received your submission and a supplementary submission and they have already been authorised for publication. Do you have any additions, amendments or changes to those written submissions?

Mrs McDonald—I would like to make a comment on them and I do have an addition that I would like to table.

ACTING CHAIR—Do you want to table another piece of paper?

Mrs McDonald—Yes.

ACTING CHAIR—How about you introduce that first. If you just read into the *Hansard* record what that piece of paper is and we can formally incorporate that in the evidence.

Mrs McDonald—I am tabling 48 pages of a transcript of an interview with Herman Ortman and some pages of a transcript of an interview with Bill Elmecher, two No. 4 gunners who were on the *Kormoran*.

ACTING CHAIR—Thank you. They are incorporated. This follows on your earlier written submission, doesn't it?

Mrs McDonald—Yes.

ACTING CHAIR—Would you like to make a short opening statement?

Mrs McDonald—Yes. I would like to comment on the submissions. In submission No. 1, I did adhere to the terms of reference of the inquiry rather than detail my research. I would ask the inquiry to look at that submission with my paper for the 1997 forum in Fremantle and also the Flinders University research report No. 57 on regional sound and light propagation during the sinking of HMAS *Sydney* by Dr Byron-Scott and Dr John Bye, which was commissioned by me. That will give the committee a bit more of an overview of my own particular research.

I also implore you not to reject the sightings of more than 40 people in the Port Gregory and Northampton area. These sightings begin with smoke at sunset near Steep Point and Kalbarri. They culminate in huge battle sounds and flashes off Port Gregory after midnight. Later, a red-orange glow could be seen in the north-west sky as far away as Horrocks Beach and Bluff Point, Geraldton.

Lots of families saw this event: the Taylors, the Pluschkes, the Robs, Sucklings, Porters, Ridleys, Gills, Forresters, Boxes, Mallards, Clarkes, Councillor, Drage, Dunnell, Cox and Stokes. Most had attended a function at the local Yallabatharra school and were on their way home or had just gone to bed. The red-orange glow witnessed in the north-west sky from Bluffs Point in Geraldton by Samuel Dawson and his daughter Adelina was described as a large red-orange glow which flared twice and then disappeared. This is nearly an identical description to the one given by the *Kormoran*'s Herman Ortman, who observed *Sydney*'s last moments in the sky to the south-east.

Some of these people found debris washing in two to three days later. Also found 20 miles north of Port Gregory was a packing case board, four foot by nine inches, with HMAS *Sydney* painted on it, attached to a fired flare. More controversially are two reports of a grey lifeboat coming ashore in this area and taken away by authorities. These people are good, honest farming folk. They have no reason to lie and most did not volunteer their story until I went to see them.

One person, Adelina Cox, nee Dawson, was able to fix the date as the early hours of 20 November 1941. Others have their links in time with other matters concerning the loss of *Sydney*. However, it is the Rob family who provide contemporaneous proof of the time frame. They left the family farm shortly after this occurrence and did not return until after the war. The loss of their four children from the little local school caused it to close. The school closed on 19 December 1941 and did not reopen until April 1943. The Rob children are on the school list for 1941 and they do not reappear until after 1946.

My confidential second supplementary submission was in response to a comment that Barbara Winter made in her submission that Bill Elmecher, a *Kormoran* survivor, had been upset by Michael Montgomery and refused to speak to anyone. I detailed that I had spent two days interviewing Mr Elmecher at his invitation but he had asked me not to publish anything about him. As I said earlier, I have since spent the day with Herman Ortman and I have got four hours of a taped transcript and that is what I am tabling.

Both men were 18-year-old gunners on the No. 4 gun. Both men are very different and both interviews were conducted in different circumstances. I have no reason to doubt the sincerity of these gentlemen who have lived in Australia as long as I have. I could not help but be aware of the pain the continued rumours had given them. There are some parts where their testimony conflicts: one thought the *Sydney* was closed up at battle stations, the other tells the story of cooks and others walking about. One recalls drifting along with a large amount of debris from his ship for at least two days and the other recalls no debris at all.

One was in the first lifeboat to leave the ship and the other was in the last with his captain.

Herman Ortman had a close eyewitness view of the demise of his ship when the 400 mines blew. Two-thirds of it disintegrated with only the forecastle the last piece of wreckage to sink below the waves. During the many hours of discussions with these gentlemen it was possible to hear how their voice altered as they discussed different topics. Herman was a good example of this: he had a nervous cough and was obviously uncomfortable and upset at times. It would be an interesting exercise for someone to analyse these voice patterns.

My third submission was after I had read up to the eight volumes of submissions and I felt a need to forward my research on Gerhardt Grossman after making comment with his widow. She says that Gerhardt Grossman never returned to Australia. I also indicated annoyance at the Department of Defence submission, particularly in relation to the use of *Kormoran* time zones without identification. I supplied some other information on a projectile found on the Zuytdorp Cliffs and made some comments on some other issues. I do not want to go into my hypothesis yet unless you ask me.

ACTING CHAIR—Thank you. On behalf of the committee, I compliment you on your detailed research on this issue. I want to come back to something that I asked this morning, and I hope you were here and heard me ask it, in relation to Grossman. You have indicated in your papers that Grossman was an imposter—I think they were the words that were used. Can you give us an idea of your understanding of the conversation between Pastor Wittwer and Grossman?

Mrs McDonald—I have only got what I read in the newspaper and what Pastor Wittwer wrote to me and Judith Bennett. I think a joint letter was sent to both of us. My understanding was that Grossman was having coffee laced with something and he said that a Japanese submarine sank the *Sydney* and machine gunned the survivors afterwards. It is a while since I have read the letter so I am not too sure on it. Pastor Wittwer asked him to repeat it the following day and then they repeated it in front of security and Pastor Wittwer has not changed his story from day one.

ACTING CHAIR—In relation to the overseas archives, where, in your view, are those unresearched archives and how do you think we might go about obtaining them?

Mrs McDonald—I have not had a lot of experience with the overseas archives except the Public Records Office in London. That was because I did not have the funds and also I am not able to speak German or Dutch or Japanese so I really did not attempt to do any work in the overseas archives other than the Public Records Office in London.

Mr DONDAS—I asked the director of the Maritime Museum of Western Australia this morning whether any debris had been handed in to the museum and he said, 'No.' Yet you have indicated that from oral history there was some debris washed ashore near Port Gregory.

Mrs McDonald—Perhaps the majority of the debris that was washed ashore at Port Gregory came from a lifeboat. It was picked up and taken to the family home and utilised. There was a four-gallon tin of cabbage; a brand-new tyre on a very damaged rim, which they put on their truck and later on a tractor; a hissing four-gallon tin of metho, which they did not touch because it looked too dangerous; a 150-gallon tin of kapok, and four or five lifebelts that were knocked around a bit but not burned. You have to remember that this was an extremely isolated place. It is still isolated today, but it was very isolated in 1941. People drove to town once every three months for their supplies. These people just took this stuff back and utilised it. I do not think that they were too aware.

The packing case board with HMAS *Sydney* painted on it, attached to a fired flare, was picked up by a VDC patrol and handed in to the military authorities in Geraldton. I do not know why it has not appeared on any list. There was a box marked HMAS *Sydney* that was found on Green Islet, a record of which is in the Australian War Memorial but which is also not on any official list. Perhaps some of the VDC debris recovery somehow or other has not gone on to any list in Canberra.

Mr DONDAS—In your submission, you say that on the evening that they saw these magnificent fireworks displays there were orange flashes and glows on the horizon. Surely the residents in Port Gregory would have realised that there was something going on out there and, if anything came ashore, it may have been important to that event. You are saying that they may not have been aware of it.

Mrs McDonald—I am just saying that the people who picked up this debris took it home.

Mr DONDAS—In the submission, you indicated that navy clearance divers have told you that they know where the *Sydney* is. On what information do you base that statement?

Mrs McDonald—I just said that I had anecdotal information from a couple of different people that the navy might know where the *Sydney* is and had dived on it. I do not think that information is of high enough standing to really comment more on it.

Mr DONDAS—Further, you said that, in terms of the body on Christmas Island, you had reasonable evidence to say that that body was definitely from the *Sydney*.

Mrs McDonald—I said that I supported the work of Ros Page and Dr John Bye. I think their evidence shows that the float could definitely have landed on Christmas Island. I think the challenge that was put out by Tom Frame in his book was for the people that thought that that float could go up the coast and then turn at right angles at Christmas Island to put up or shut up.

Dr Bye, with the help of Ros Page—both are South Australians—released about 970 drift cards from the area and then collected information on where those drift cards went.

Those cards certainly indicated that the drift would take them up the coast. It did, in fact, turn right angles at the Cocos Islands and Christmas Island and then went down the coast of Africa.

I am saying that there is a high indication that the float could have come from *Sydney*. It was in the water about 11 weeks and there were about three inches of barnacles on the bottom of it. As far as I am concerned, the float had 'Leichardt—made in Australia' on it. Whether it had blue or red twine to me makes no difference. Ships, like *Sydney*, in wartime took on supplies and stores wherever and however they could and whenever they needed them. I am sure that there was a fair bit of a mish-mash of equipment on board all our ships.

Mr DONDAS—Could there have been a reasonable way of identifying the body? How would you come to this assumption that the body could be identified?

Mrs McDonald—The only basis I have about identifying the body is my research of Jonathon Rowbotham. In this case he seems to have information that nobody else has because it does not seem to be in anything else. So whether he talked to the people that were involved at the time, I do not know, but he actually does indicate that the body was buried in a coffin and that the coffin was made to accommodate the body. The body had been in a semi-sitting position for so long that they actually built the coffin around the body. I have not got the technical knowledge to know whether that coffin is still going to be in one piece, but certainly, if it were, it could be a modified coffin.

Senator MARGETTS—Were you here for the evidence this morning?

Mrs McDonald—I flew down this morning so I came in part way through Mr Ryding's information.

Senator MARGETTS—We had evidence from Kim Kirsner and John Dunn in relation to the location, or what they believe is the location, of the HMAS *Sydney*. From the historical evidence that you have collected have you come to any conclusions about the latitude and longitude of the potential position?

Mrs McDonald—Perhaps I can answer that by saying that I know that the foundation trust were giving out a lot of the latitudes and longitudes that have been given to them by the Germans, but Captain Detmers in his book published his position of the battle, which was latitude 26 degrees 34 minutes south, and his navigator, Meyer, actually said that the battle was at latitude 27 degrees south. Both of them said 111 degrees longitude. That is a lot further south than the perception when the Prime Minister made the announcement that the battle was 300 miles west of Carnarvon. That position of Detmers is sort of off Steep Point and the other one is further south than that. Obviously my people could not have seen a battle at longitude 111 degrees. For them to have seen what they saw, it either had to be closer to the coast, or they saw *Sydney* trying to make for Geraldton and finally blowing up.

Prior to the assistance that Dr Bye gave me, I assumed that the *Kormoran* was scuttled in such a way that the 400 mines blew, and any ship that blows up with 400 mines exploding must produce an explosion that would have been pretty high and pretty gigantic. I always felt that perhaps that is what the majority of them saw.

Dr Bye has actually detailed the weather patterns and the wind patterns and every other pattern, and he said that the people could not have seen the battle from longitude 111 degrees. He gives a source position of where he thinks those sound and light waves emanated from, and that is about 50 miles off the coast. That is the position where I asked the navy and the maritime museum in 1995 to think about conducting a grid search. So, no, my people would have seen something a lot closer to the coast, perhaps, unless somebody with more technology can tell me how high 400 mines blow in the air and how far you can see it.

Senator MARGETTS—Are there any other stories or sources of information that you have received to give any other possible explanation of what it was that those 40 or so people saw?

Mrs McDonald—No. I have been hunting for possible explanations and the people themselves are quite happy if another explanation is given. But they link it in time with the *Sydney*. I know that as years pass you can compress time, but there are things such as pulling your wheat truck over on the side of the road to let the convoy go up to Carnarvon to pick up the Germans not long after you have seen what you have seen. There are people that saw the flashes and then their husbands happened to do the search of the beaches with the VDC on 28 November. So there are all these links with their time.

The only other area that I have a great problem with is that Port Gregory was shelled by the Japanese on 28 January 1943. Initially, I thought that is what they had seen, but you do not get any debris with a shelling. The Rob family, whose description of the battle matched everybody else's—the father, the mother, the brother, one daughter and their home help girl all saw this battle—left the area by Christmas 1941 and did not come back until after the war.

So, apart from trying to ensure that there was no mix-up with the Japanese shelling of 1943, my research has not given me any other battle that it could possibly have been.

Senator MARGETTS—What is your response to the fact that there is no point in checking further in the archives for the position, or for evidence of a different position?

Mrs McDonald—My problem was obviously that I tried to find some contemporaneous evidence that these flashes were reported, because I know they were. As I have said, the police files for Northampton and Geraldton are missing, and I spent a considerable amount of time trying to track them down. Originally, I went to the police stations, I went to the Battyre library, I went to the police library, I wrote to the minister for police, and then I had an independent state politician ask questions in parliament.

There are a number of other archives that I have sourced that just do not happen to be there. Whether that is any orchestrated 'missing', or whether it is just, as was said earlier, that we did not save things, I do not know. I am not sure that there will be more to find, unless somebody is going to open up a door and say, 'It is all in there.'

Senator MARGETTS—What, if anything, could be learned from the remains of the body on Christmas Island if it was, indeed, a crew member from the *Sydney*?

Mrs McDonald—I want that body exhumed and identified and brought home. To me, that is more a social issue. I think that he is the only *Sydney* boy who we know where he is, and we should honour him and bring him home. I really do not think that we will learn too much from the body itself per se.

ACTING CHAIR—Could I just ask a number of questions about Port Gregory? What did the *Moresby* find when it conducted the two spot searches off the coast? Port Gregory was the first one. Have the two magnetic anomalies found off the coast of Port Gregory in July 1995 been closely examined? Finally, you mention in your submission that Port Gregory may have been a site where bodies were cleaned up and, to use your quote, 'disposed of in a manner unpalatable to the relatives'. On what do you base that assertion? So there are three questions.

Mrs McDonald—Number one, I think, was in reference to the *Moresby*'s chart that was put out to the public where they showed all the areas off the coast where they had done their survey work. There is an area just north of Port Gregory—in fact, it is a blank on the map, and there is another blank up at Shark Bay. I know that the *Moresby* was involved in the combined Navy-Maritime Museum searches. The one closest to my area was a magnetic anomaly that Michael Montgomery pointed out, and they searched that and it was quite natural.

As to the other two magnetic anomalies, a fair bit of work has been done on them by World Geoscience. Initially, from the oil surveys, those two magnetic anomalies that were 10 miles apart looked like they were shipwreck size and on the seabed. The flights that World Geoscience did over them, because the original pattern was too wide to really pick it up properly, indicated that they were 200 feet below the seabed. To my knowledge, nobody has been out there with a boat or any other equipment to investigate that further, so they look like being part of the natural magnetic anomaly pattern that is off the coast in that area.

ACTING CHAIR—What about the bodies being cleaned up?

Mrs McDonald—Like most other people, I find it very difficult to understand why we have 723 missing bodies. For me that is magnified if the battle was closer to the coast. I can perhaps assume—if it is at longitude 111 and we took 4½ to eight days to do any searching—that some of them might not have been found. But, if the flashes off Port Gregory bring the battle closer to the coast, 50 or 80 miles off, then it is even more interesting that we

have got 723 missing bodies.

If *Sydney* was trying to make Geraldton, and she was unstable with flooding of compartments and trying to deal with the fires on board, she may have turned turtle in a few minutes and gone to the bottom really quickly. You may have only got the lifeboat that went to Christmas Island or possibly the lifeboat that went to Port Gregory come off, but you have still got 75 or 80 German bodies. I just found it quite incredible that there was only one German body and the Christmas Island body found.

If it was 50 to 80 miles off the coast, obviously you try to come up with a hypothesis. It was a very hot November; we did not really have the resources to deal with a mass of bodies in the way that perhaps the relatives would have wished. Added to that, you have the *Cape Otway* anecdotal information of coming in to bodies at the Zuytdorp Cliffs. So perhaps we just had to do something about collecting those bodies and dealing with them in a manner that people would not have accepted if they had known.

ACTING CHAIR—You heard the evidence of the trust before lunch. Would you be prepared to accept at this point that perhaps the emphasis of this inquiry initially should be put in the direction that has been suggested in terms of some of the areas of highest probability as a first step, rather than be looking for nothing, if you accept what you have already said in terms of the magnetic anomalies off Port Gregory? Would you not agree that, tactically, the best way to deal with it is to take the approach suggested by the trust initially?

Mrs McDonald—In my submission, I actually suggested that I would like to see Detmers' position checked out, and I would like to see the source position for the light and sound from Port Gregory checked out. The trust actually are not checking out Detmers' position; they are checking out another position which is not the one that the German captain gave. So you either believe the German captain or you do not. I would actually like the German captain's position checked out to see whether he was lying or whether he was not. I would like to have the other position checked out, I agree, as a second step.

ACTING CHAIR—But aren't they suggesting that?

Mrs McDonald—No, their position is slightly different. The German captain said that the ship went down at latitude 26 degrees 34 minutes, longitude 111 degrees. I think the trust is looking at 26 degrees 07 minutes, 111 degrees 15 minutes, which is not the German position. The position that they have come to is the position that the two technical experts have come to, and it is not exactly the German's position.

ACTING CHAIR—You probably have not seen this paper because it was only handed to us this morning. The intersecting area contains both of those. It does include, as I understand it, Detmers' position as well. It is not specifically what they are suggesting, but it is within that overall area.

Mrs McDonald—It would be in a search, if they are going to do one. I actually agree that that could be a first step but, as I said, you either go by what the German captain said is the position and check it out, or by their position, my position or anybody else's position.

Senator SANDY MACDONALD—Did you hear the HMAS *Sydney* Foundation Trust describing this morning how they found them?

Mrs McDonald—Yes.

Senator SANDY MACDONALD—They worked back. They said they had 43 pieces of information or source material pieces, and that, even if they cut that in half and had 20 original ones, they had a number of work-back positions. That is how they found theirs. They worked backwards as well as forwards.

Mrs McDonald—Yes. The number 40 was mentioned in reference to the fact that, in the interrogation, the Germans were saying where the battle was.

Senator SANDY MACDONALD—I think they are using all sorts of pieces of information. They are using the sites where the lifeboats were picked up.

Mrs McDonald—Could I comment on that? There are two issues there. One is that from these two huge ships there was hardly any debris, so their position is based on the drift of that very small amount of debris. None of that debris was burnt, and yet there were supposed to be two ships pretty heavily on fire. It could have been debris that was knocked overboard during the battle and not necessarily debris from the sinking ships, and so their emphasis on a very small portion of debris needs to be addressed.

The other thing is about trying to determine where the seven lifeboats went and how they went. Even Herman Ortman said the other day that, with the last two boats that left the ship within 20 minutes of each other, one ended up on the coast and the other was still in the shipping lane and was picked up by the *Centaur*. Those boats had rigged up sails. You have also got to remember that on our west coast we have pretty strong southerly winds—

Senator SANDY MACDONALD—Are you telling me that they got to landfall within 20 minutes of leaving the ship?

Mrs McDonald—No. The last two lifeboats that left the *Kormoran* left within 20 minutes of each other, but one ended up on the coast and one was out at sea. He had no explanation for that. The men in those boats rigged up sails. The boats had sails in them. On some of them, the sails that were pulled out of the lockers were all holes, and so the men used blankets. Other boats, such as the one that came in at 17 Mile Well, had two sails rigged. It is very hard to work out the drifts of lifeboats that have got sails. The weather pattern for the time was such that, although it was relatively still and clear for the first two days, from day three a southerly gale blew. Basing everything that this committee might

come up with at the end on a very small amount of debris and trying to work out drift analysis on boats that have got some sort of manoeuvrability are things that need to be treated carefully.

ACTING CHAIR—I think the committee would be interested in your written reaction to the Kirsner and Dunn paper. Could you do that for us?

Mrs McDonald—Yes, absolutely.

ACTING CHAIR—Do you feel technically competent to do that?

Mrs McDonald—I could certainly give an amateur's response to it.

ACTING CHAIR—Okay; we would be interested to have your reaction—let me put it that way. Will you take that on notice for us?

Mrs McDonald—Certainly.

Senator SANDY MACDONALD—I do not have a map in front of me and I am not quite sure how far south of latitude 26 Port Gregory is.

Mrs McDonald—Actually, I can show you a road map. I have got proper charts, but the map might give you a bit of an idea of where Port Gregory is and where the houses were. Port Gregory is at latitude 28 degrees 13 minutes.

Senator SANDY MACDONALD—So how far south is that?

Mrs McDonald—How far south of what?

Senator SANDY MACDONALD—How far south of latitude 26 is it? What is the distance between latitudes?

Mrs McDonald—Each latitude is 60 nautical miles.

Senator SANDY MACDONALD—So that is 120 miles. When you were speaking before in support of the carley float at Christmas Island, you said you supported Dr Bye's evidence and that you were impressed by that. One of the points that he makes is that the Leeuwin current comes down close to the coast and that the Western Australian current goes north, a little further out. For the Christmas Island carley float to have veracity, it would have had to have been in the Western Australian current going north and then coming west towards Christmas Island.

Mrs McDonald—Yes.

Senator SANDY MACDONALD—I must say that, from an amateur's point of view, it is a long way, but it is certainly possible. On your hypothesis of it being very much closer to the coast, does that still fit in with Dr Bye's analysis that it was in the Western Australian current? Do you know the depth of the Leeuwin current, which would carry the carley float south?

Mrs McDonald—I am not technically qualified to answer that. I really do not know whether, if it were closer to shore, the same thing would happen. The only thing I would say is that the drift cards were carried totally by the current and not by the wind, but a carley float that sits up a little bit higher would have also had the wind to carry it.

Senator SANDY MACDONALD—The prevailing wind was a strong south-easterly, I understand.

Mrs McDonald—Yes.

Senator SANDY MACDONALD—There was another point that I wanted to ask you about. Did I understand you to say a life raft from the *Sydney* came ashore near Port Gregory? Was there anecdotal evidence of that?

Mrs McDonald—Yes. With all the information I have been given—and I think that I have heard every story under the sun about the *Sydney*—I do not use anything unless I get it from two sources. I had been told by a gentleman, who was part of the Forrester family that lived at Baleine station, that he had a recollection of when he was only a very young boy, when a large grey lifeboat was being hauled up by his father and the men on the farm on horseback. He remembers walking up with his father to the lifeboat, which was covered by canvas. It was being inspected by other men and it was then taken away.

I have had that information for years and years but, because the gentleman had been only four years old at that time, I did not use it. I did not think it was appropriate to use it—although, sometimes, four year olds, if they are walking around a lifeboat and peering in under the canvas, have got a pretty good memory of it. I put it in the submission only after a justice of the peace in Geraldton signed a statement and told me that he was told by a gentleman that a grey lifeboat came ashore near Baleine station and that he had had to ride to Northampton to notify authorities. When I asked who that person was, it was a Mr Forrester, the father of the gentleman I had heard from. So that is the only information that I have got about a grey lifeboat in the area. I have heard rumours on radio programs about people saying similar things, but I have got no information other than that the Forrester family obviously believed that a boat came in and that it was taken away.

Senator SANDY MACDONALD—Do you think there is anybody with information that you do not have, in that community? Furthermore, do you think that there is anybody in the old families who has some debris, souvenirs, or anything like that, which they are not disclosing?

Mrs McDonald—As far as there being other people that I have not tapped goes, that is always a possibility. But, because I lived in the area and know the people—and a lot of the farming families are the pioneer families and they are still there today—they were able to tell me who lived on every station, and I feel that I have followed most of those up. But I keep having additional ones, because I found somebody from Geraldton who was holidaying with people out at Northampton. I think I have tapped most of them. Unfortunately, a lot of them are dead now, so it is mostly the kids—12 or 13 or 18—apart from Mrs Porter and some of the oldies who are still there.

As far as anything being left goes, the only thing that might be able to be found—and it was too big a job for me to even think about—is the wheel that they found, which had a very badly dented rim, and they threw it in the farm dump or tip and used the rubber tyre. If I could get them to remember where the tip was, the rim of that tyre might still be there. They ate the cabbage—it was dehydrated, so their mother was being good in giving them that—and they utilised the galvanised tanks.

There were four or five life vests. I should say that the life belts caused me some confusion for some time, because they felt they were kapok life belts, and the *Sydney* crew had inflated life belts. Since then, Jack Heazlewood, who is now deceased but was from New South Wales and was a crew member of the *Sydney*, said that the lifeboats had kapok or cork life belts in them. He used to pull them out and use them as a pillow to have a sleep on deck. The people that I spoke to felt that they had put these life belts in the shed. They had sold the property, and they felt that the shed might have burnt down; perhaps there is a slim possibility of following them up.

Apart from the rim being in the tip—which I thought might be something that I would deal with one day when I had time—I do not think that there is any other debris. The packing case board marked HMAS *Sydney* was supposed, like the remnants of the Christmas Island float, to have been handed in. I do not know where that might be.

ACTING CHAIR—In the supplementary submission, you referred to an anonymous person contacting the *Sydney Morning Herald* with claims about the *Cape Otway* finding bodies in the water but then being ordered to leave the area. Have you been able to investigate that further? Do you have anything more substantive?

Mrs McDonald—No, I do not. I found it interesting, I suppose, because I always like to get two versions of a story before I think it has any credibility. We always had Jack Heazlewood's information about the *Cape Otway*, and this appeared to be a second version. I did write a letter to the editor of the newspaper, asking that person to come forward or to put a submission in to the inquiry. I certainly have not had any feedback, no.

Senator SANDY MACDONALD—You mentioned you had the opportunity—and it must have been exciting—to interview both Mr Ortman and Mr Elmecher. Would you be able to add to your very brief words of introduction about your four-hour transcript? Would it be

appropriate? Do you want to put it on the public record now?

Mrs McDonald—I enjoyed my time with both gentlemen, and Mr Elmecher actually invited me to come and spend some time with him. His version of events is really interesting, in a way, because he did not see anything, he did not do anything and he did not fire a shot. He knows nothing. He said 'Some people said that the *Sydney* tried to ram us. Some people said that she tried to do this. Some people said she tried to do that. I did not see anything.' He actually said that his job when the *Kormoran* decamouflaged was to run out and drop a rail. That is when he said he was sitting there really scared, as an 18-year-old looking at the *Sydney*, and he felt that she was at action stations.

He ran out and dropped his rail, and they started firing before he could get back in. The first firing burst his eardrum. By the time he recovered from that, his next job was to handle ammunition. The ammunition handlers were working so fast and so furiously that the paint was peeling off the No. 4 gun and he could not fit in to any sequence, so he sat down and had a cigarette. The minute that it was all over and he heard his captain say, 'Abandon ship!', he was off and into the first boat that left the ship.

Interestingly enough, he was in the boat that was picked up by the *Koolinda*, which was the wooden one they had captured from the *Nicholas DL*. It capsized and turned over. That might be why there were only about 34 Germans in that quite large boat. He did not do anything, did not see anything and was into the first boat and off.

Herman Ortman, on the other hand—and this is where there is confusion, and memory is a bit hazy—thought it was his job to run out and drop the rail. He actually had difficulty in kicking the rail over. He had to lie on his backside and kick with his legs. He believes that he and Bill then handled the ammunition until it was all over. There seems to be a very strange period of time then for Herman because, according to him, he did not go to where they were launching the lifeboats until there were no lifeboats left. That is why he was left, stuck until they managed to winch up the last two lifeboats.

The only other difference between them was that Bill has great recollection of sailing through lots and lots of debris for two days. In fact, the *Kormoran* had a pig on board. When the drowned pig was floating past, they tried to catch it. I do not know whether they would have ever had raw pork. They could not catch it. They caught some pineapple. He was quite specific about the boots, the wood, the debris and the lots of stuff that was with them for about two days, whereas Herman did not see any debris at all.

I suppose it will annoy people, when they read the 48 pages of transcript, that I did not ask Herman all the technicalities about who fired first and whatever. I was probably more interested in where the HMAS *Sydney* went and other things.

ACTING CHAIR—What age would both of those gentlemen be now?

Mrs McDonald—I do not know. What is your maths like? They were 18? Herman was one of the youngest on board.

ACTING CHAIR—They would be around 75. Are they both in good health?

Mrs McDonald—No. One of the reasons Bill was a bit worried about me going to the press with anything that he said was that he has a bad heart. Bill is really interesting about his life in the camp. He escaped for 10 months, came back the last day to give himself up to go home and was back in Australia as soon as he could. Herman was picked up by the *Centaur* and he thinks somebody from the *Centaur* sent two parcels to the camp for the two youngest *Kormoran* people. Because of that gesture of goodwill, he wanted to come back and live in Australia, but it took a few girlfriends before he could find someone who was willing to come to Australia. He took another couple of years to get here.

ACTING CHAIR—Has neither gentleman indicated any predilection to appear before this committee?

Mrs McDonald—No. Herman is very willing to talk to anybody. I think they wish it was all over and would all go away. Both of them were absolutely adamant that there was no Japanese submarine. Relistening to Herman's tapes, there are some funny subtle changes to his voice. There are some nervous coughs and some areas where he is uncomfortable. That is not my area of expertise. Those tapes are there if I can find anybody to analyse them and say whether this person is telling the truth. I do not know.

ACTING CHAIR—Did you raise Mr Grossman with either of them? Are they aware of Grossman? What was their view of him?

Mrs McDonald—They are aware of Grossman because I heard about Grossman not long after the Anzac Day ceremony. I rang up Herman, whom I had never rung before but I happened to have his phone number. Initially I thought it might have been Heinz Grossmass, because there was a Heinz Grossmass as well as a Gerhardt Grossman on board. He said, 'I don't think it is Heinz. He was on my boat and I don't think he ever came back to Australia. I don't know about Gerhardt, but I think he went back to East Germany.' By then I knew it was supposed to be Gerhardt Grossman.

He gave me his last known address in East Germany, but he was not there any more. I have a friend in Germany and managed to track down his widow, because it is a small town. She said that he died in 1986. They were married in 1948 and he had never left Germany. It was not possible to leave from East Germany, and he had never ever gone back to Australia.

ACTING CHAIR—Is that why you made the comment about the imposter?

Mrs McDonald—Yes. I thought that, whoever it was, it was not Gerhardt

Grossman—on the information that I have.

ACTING CHAIR—All right. Thank you very much. You will be given a copy of the *Hansard* record. If you have any other supplementary thoughts, please give them to us. We welcome your views and, once again, we congratulate you on your detail.

Mrs McDonald—Thank you for the opportunity.

[2.26 p.m.]

OLSON, Mr Wesley John, 38 Tonkin Road, Hilton, Western Australia 6163

ACTING CHAIR—Welcome. You are appearing in a private capacity. We have received your submission and a supplementary submission, and they have been authorised for publication. Do you have any amendments, additions or deletions to either of those?

Mr Olson—Yes, I do have some amendments to my first submission. In that, I claim that several of the reports of proceedings of HMAS *Sydney* were missing from the archives. After double-checking I found that there were not several. There is only one in October 1940.

ACTING CHAIR—Was that referred to in your original submission or in the supplementary submission?

Mr Olson—In the first one: submission No. 34. Also, selected pages from reports relating to the interrogation of prisoners were missing. In that, I was being specific concerning a report by Commander Dechaineux. I have since found the missing page, so I consider that report at least to be complete. That is all I have by way of amendments.

ACTING CHAIR—Would you like to make a short opening statement or go straight into it?

Mr Olson—Let us go straight into it, if you like.

Senator MARGETTS—Have you had the opportunity of listening to the evidence that has been given throughout today?

Mr Olson—Yes, as much as I have been able to.

Senator MARGETTS—We have a variety of opinions in relation to the location of the HMAS *Sydney*. I note that you put yourself as a leading researcher on matters relating to the HMAS *Sydney*. Where would you place the HMAS *Sydney*?

Mr Olson—Essentially, in the circle that the HMAS *Sydney* Foundation Trust has drawn up. I did not make this part of my submission, but I did look into this matter a few years ago and I generally agree with the German account. I generally agree with the position given by Detmers for the position of the action, but the position he gave may have been that at the very start of the action, when the HMAS *Sydney* was first sighted. The battle may have headed westward, away from that original position. I still accept that the *Kormoran*, at least, will be found fairly close to where Detmers said the action was.

Senator MARGETTS—Would you rule out finding the HMAS *Sydney* in the position alluded to by Mrs McDonald?

Mr Olson—Not necessarily; according to the German statements, she was last seen shortly before midnight as a glow on the horizon. They indicated that they heard no explosion, although some of them thought they saw the glow flare up. After doing a study of battle damage to the sister ships and similar British cruisers, I found that it was possible for *Sydney* to have survived that night and continued into the next day. While I would not say categorically that she may have reached the position Glenys indicates where she may have gone down, it is possible.

Senator MARGETTS—Do you share the view that finding the *Sydney* should be the main goal, or are you of the view that we should attempt to get an idea of what happened, or that there is a possibility that we can actually form an opinion on what happened?

Mr Olson—I think the whole issue should be a two-pronged assault: that the ship should be found, but also that a proper study of archival documents should be conducted to try and reconstruct events on 19 November. Just finding the ship is not going to fully explain what happened. The books that have been published to date do not fully explain what happened, not to my satisfaction. That is why I am embarking on my own research. I feel that both areas need to be addressed.

Senator MARGETTS—Are there some key sources of information which you think will help fill in the jigsaw and, if so, is there some means by which this committee could make recommendations to help locate those key sources of information?

Mr Olson—I am not sure what you mean by 'key sources'. The documents that are available in archives, to my way of thinking, explain what happened. From the German interrogation notes, if they are interpreted correctly, you can get a fairly good idea of what happened, and I believe that this is why the navy was generally satisfied with their evidence in 1941-1942. As far as narrowing the search area for the vessels, it is possible that DF bearings from signals sent by either of the ships may help to narrow the search area and may be able to pinpoint where the action occurred.

I believe that the Australian Archives have already gone through the signal packs—which generally are not available to the public because they contain sensitive information about individuals. I believe that they have already gone through those, looking specifically for signals relating to the *Sydney*—in other words, ones having come from her or to her. I have had a look at one signal pack for 24 November, and there are clearly signals that are unidentified, but you have got a bearing from *Harmon* to a specific intercept of a signal. So it is possible that there are documents still in the signal packs providing bearings from stations to a source where they have picked it up—which may help to narrow the search area.

ACTING CHAIR—What about the board of inquiry?

Mr Olson—Yes. It is difficult. There is no actual archive—

ACTING CHAIR—Nobody seems to know—

Mr Olson—I would suggest the Admiralty documents in London, the PRO. I found this in the Australian Archives. It is a copy of an Admiralty fleet order issued in December 1939. It is in my submission, but I will repeat it. The order reads:

Reports of boards of inquiry held to investigate losses of, or damage to HM ships, other than small craft, by enemy action, are to be rendered to the admiralty in duplicate.

And this is 1939 and it applied to all HM ships, including Australian ships. It would be logical to assume that an inquiry was conducted for the loss of the *Sydney*. The Royal Navy conducted two boards of inquiry into the loss of the *Hood*. The sister ship of the *Sydney*, HMAS *Hobart*, was torpedoed in July 1943, and a board of inquiry was conducted into how she was damaged. That document is something like 20 pages long and—

ACTING CHAIR—Did that document comply with the Admiralty fleet order?

Mr Olson—Yes, it did.

ACTING CHAIR—That was 1943, so one would assume that it would be logical to expect the *Sydney* to comply as well. Thank you, that is important. I think that the board of inquiry has been a big missing link, perhaps, in this whole episode, and we will pursue that. Although it would be fair to say that the Department of Defence have had, as I recall from their evidence at the initial hearing, some correspondence with the Admiralty and feel there is nothing else that they can provide, there may have been something in there which is subject to the 75-year rule—I do not know.

Mr Olson—It is also possible that, as there were no survivors from the *Sydney*, there was perceived to be no need for a board of inquiry because they did not have any witnesses except for the Germans, and the Germans were interrogated. An independent person, Mr Eldridge—

ACTING CHAIR—Yes, we have got that.

Mr Olson—was brought in to study those notes. He prepared a report for the naval board on his findings. I do not think that the matter should have been finished there. There should have been a naval board report to the Admiralty on the loss. There is reference to one in—

ACTING CHAIR—At the very least, you would expect there to have been a report to the Admiralty saying, 'In accordance with AFO XYZ—

Mr Olson—That is right.

ACTING CHAIR—HMAS *Sydney* was lost,'—even if it were just a couple of sentences like that.

Mr Olson—That is right. In volume 8 I noticed one part of one of the submissions included battle summaries—No. 13—covering Raiders and how they were intercepted and destroyed. They used case studies, including the *Sydney*'s, and the *Sydney*'s source was quoted as document M05540/42. To date I have not been able to identify what document that is. Clearly that was something sent from the Australian Naval Board to the Admiralty, explaining the circumstances of the *Sydney*'s loss. Whether that document is in archives and I have overlooked it—

ACTING CHAIR—Is that dated, or is there just that number?

Mr Olson—That is just the number, but '/42', I interpret as being 1942.

ACTING CHAIR—Okay.

Senator MARGETTS—You mentioned that you have no reason to have a different view from that gained from the interrogation notes from the German survivors. A suggestion was given to us by Mr Ryding today that there may well have been few people who actually saw what happened at the time on the *Kormoran* and that there may well have been enough time to decide a position. Do you think that is feasible?

Mr Olson—Possibly. The Germans indicate that the ship was abandoned in two stages. There was an initial abandonment shortly after the action, when it was realised that the ship could not be saved, the fires could not be put out, and the fire was threatening to spread to the mine deck.

It is my understanding that as many people were got off the ship at that stage as possible, including some that just simply jumped overboard because of the fear of explosion. I believe that they are some of the ones allegedly lost when a rubber raft capsized. Then there was a large body of about 100 men, I believe, still on the ship, trying to recover lifeboats out of the forward hold. If there were collusion amongst the Germans to concoct the story, I do not think that it would have happened with the first group, who were just keen to get off the ship. But it is possible that there may have been collusion amongst the remainder, who got on the last two lifeboats.

My personal opinion is that I do not think that there was a story concocted. I think that what they told was essentially the truth—or the truth as they saw it—bearing in mind that not a lot of the Germans gave any information to the interrogating officers on what happened. Of those that did, some of them were not in any position to see. I believe that the handful that could see, once they were in the lifeboats or on rubber rafts, talked about the action. Others who did not get to see anything accepted their story as fact and, if somebody was wrong in what they saw, that wrongful information may have been passed on to 20 or 30

other men. No, I do not think that there was any preparation of a story for the Australians.

Mr DONDAS—You say the government must make every attempt to locate the *Sydney* and you have been pretty critical. What more do you think they should be doing?

Mr Olson—It is a difficult question. I think it should be seen to be doing something. This Christmas Island corpse is an example. The navy had reports from 1942 that a float and a corpse had appeared just off the island. Rumours were that it was from the *Sydney*. Even after the war, the rumours apparently continued to circulate until the navy decided to investigate it. In 1949, the Director of Naval Intelligence, Captain Oldham, concluded an inquiry. While his conclusions said that the corpse may have been that of an RAN rating, he was not satisfied with the particulars of the float and he concluded that the float may not have come from the *Sydney*.

But the evidence that was still available in 1949 was that the float was manufactured from Australian galvanised steel, so there was a good indication that the float came from an Australian vessel. He acknowledged that the corpse could have been that of an RAN rating, yet he decided to close the inquiry by saying that he considered that the float did not come from the *Sydney*. As far as I am concerned, whether it came from the *Sydney* or not, the evidence points to it coming from an Australian vessel, yet no effort was made to try and identify that person.

Mr DONDAS—About 16 ships came down in that time, in a couple of months?

Mr Olson—There were a few vessels sunk in the region, but the particulars of the float indicated that it came from a warship.

Mr DONDAS—Or a merchant?

Mr Olson—No; generally, merchant ships at that time were not equipped with carley floats. They were equipped with a life float, which was made of planks and buoyancy tanks, normally 44-gallon drums. The floats were supplied to some DEM ships—in other words, merchant ships which had Navy gunners on board—only if those vessels did not have enough lifesaving capacity to cover the naval ratings, the naval gunners. There were no Australian warships lost at the time that the float could have originated from. The float was damaged, according to the statements, by shrapnel. To my way of thinking, there was nothing that it could have come from except the *Sydney*.

Mr DONDAS—Could it have been that one of the reasons they did not continue the investigations in the late 1940s was that Australia did not really have control over Christmas Island in those days? We did not inherit it until the mid-1950s. It would have been mighty hard, exhuming a body in 1949.

Mr Olson—I believe there were cases where the graves of Australian army people,

former soldiers, POWs, were located in islands in the Asian region—New Guinea, the Dutch East Indies, that sort of thing. There were efforts made by the Australian government to recover the remains of servicemen and women who had been killed by the Japanese.

ACTING CHAIR—It was a two-page document by George Oldham. I knew George Oldham quite well—I was his flag lieutenant when he was later an admiral—so I think I understood then Admiral Oldham's way of doing things. I am surprised that, in a two-page, very cursory document, he dismissed it. My personal view is that I do not think you can put too much credibility on that particular document. I agree with you that there is a high probability that it came from the *Sydney*. But, again, that is just a personal view.

You may not have been here this morning when I asked the Western Australian Maritime Museum to carry out a technical examination of the carley floats. You have done some of that work too, haven't you?

Mr Olson—Yes, that is correct. The floats were not damaged by gunfire, as the one in Canberra was, so I am not sure if a full study of these particular floats is warranted. However, my interest in it was related to Oldham's conclusions. His evidence from the two chaps who provided information on the construction of the float that arrived at Christmas Island was that it was covered with kapok and that it had Australian steel in the framework.

The Admiralty specifications for carley floats were that the inside framework should be made of copper covered with cork and then covered with canvas. When I learned that there were two carley floats in the Western Australian Maritime Museum's collection, I was interested to have a look at them to see if they were made of material such as kapok. The investigation of the Australian War Memorial carley float indicated that it was made of galvanised steel made by Lysaght, and that it was a particular product called zincanneal but it was covered in cork. So when I had the opportunity to look at the two floats here I seized it.

The first one we looked at we identified as being covered with canvas and balsawood. The inside framework was made of Lysaght steel, but Queen's Head brand, which was an inferior product to zincanneal but still an Australian made product by Lysaght. When we looked at the second float we found that it was indeed covered with cork but, again, the inside framework was made by Lysaght, whereas the earlier float that we looked at was made of balsawood. We could not find a year of manufacture in the maker's brand. On the second one we found it was 1944.

At the end of the exercise I concluded that it was possible that Oldham may have based his conclusions on carley floats that were still in existence in 1949 and had a cork covering, as per Admiralty specifications. I have been told by a former *Sydney* crew member that the older floats were covered in balsawood or made of balsawood. So I assume that the first one we studied may have been a pre-war float or an early war manufactured float. The query I now have is whether kapok was used in wartime production, as an emergency contingency: if there was not enough cork, did they use kapok and did they use balsawood?

ACTING CHAIR—But was your examination of the two in Fremantle just an external examination or a scientific examination? The Australian War Memorial one did not, on the surface, appear to offer up too much. But when it was scientifically examined it gave up quite a lot.

Mr Olson—That is right. I am not a scientist; I am not into getting inside things. Fortunately, these two floats had been made unserviceable, by whom I am not sure. They had been hacked into with an axe or—

ACTING CHAIR—So it was degradation of the actual floats, rather than wartime damage?

Mr Olson—That is right. I believe these floats were possibly war surplus and were registered as lifesaving equipment. When it came time for them to be re-registered, they may have failed their buoyancy test and were thus made unserviceable.

ACTING CHAIR—Okay.

Senator SANDY MACDONALD—With regard to your research on the construction of the *Sydney*, what lifesaving capacity do you need for 645 men?

Mr Olson—That is a good question. I am not even sure if warships in those days were expected to have lifesaving capacity for all of their men. The plans of the ship show that she had a certain amount of boats and was supposed to have carried six carley floats.

Senator SANDY MACDONALD—How many men would be carried in a carley float—eight to 10?

Mr Olson—It would depend on the size. The small type floats, like the one you have in Canberra now and the two that we have here, were expected to support 20 men, but there were not necessarily 20 men inside them. It could be interpreted as 12 men inside and eight hanging on to the ropes on the outside of the float. I believe the larger floats were supposed to accommodate 67 men. I do not think you would expect to be able to get 67 inside a float.

Mr DONDAS—Don't you think it would be a bit unusual that only one person could get into a carley float, with all those other people jumping off the ship and doing all kinds of things?

Mr Olson—We are going into theory—

Mr DONDAS—We have been in theory all day.

Mr Olson—about how that float came to be in the water. It may have been blown overboard at the start of the action and men may have been blown overboard at the same

time, or it may have come from the vessel's ultimate sinking. I do not know how to answer that.

Mr DONDAS—It just sounds a bit strange, doesn't it?

Mr Olson—Yes, but we do have one case history of one of *Sydney's* near sister ships, the *Neptune*. She was mined and sunk a month later in the Mediterranean. She was virtually lost with all hands—760-odd men were lost. They eventually recovered one man from that vessel, and he was found in an Italian POW exchange. Before he died, he indicated that he was in a carley float with the captain and 14 other men. Over a period of time, they perished from exposure. The captain had succumbed on the fourth or fifth day. My understanding is that, when he was recovered by Italian motor boat, he was the only one left in that float. The others had been pushed overboard or whatever.

Senator SANDY MACDONALD—With the allegation or suggestion that signals were sent, what is your belief about whether the *Kormoran* made a signal? What do you believe about the suggestions that the HMAS *Sydney* made some signals?

Mr Olson—We have evidence in archives that the *Kormoran* sent a Q signal—a suspicious ship signal. That is consistent with what other German raiders were doing when they were intercepted.

Senator SANDY MACDONALD—To whom was that Q signal aimed or addressed?

Mr Olson—Again, we are going into theory. It could have been simply a message intended to trick the Australian cruiser. Some of the statements made by the Germans support that. Another researcher in the Eastern States, Mr Kennedy, has since found that Q signals did have a specific task, and that was to inform Germany that the raider or the vessel sending it was in trouble. If it had a particular letter sent with the time, that indicated to outside sources that the raider was in strife.

The Q signal sent by the *Kormoran* was only picked up in mutilated form by two receivers. One of them noticed that the time was present and it finished with 'GMT' which was unusual—you do not send the time as well as the letters 'GMT'—indicating that the Germans were trying to advise somebody else that they were in trouble. I have heard that it may have been intended for a nearby station which would then repeat it and that that repeat of the signal would have been picked up in Germany.

I have no problem. I believe the Germans did send a Q signal and it was sent for a reason. On the other hand, I am not convinced that the HMAS *Sydney* got a signal away. She may have; I do not know. I am still waiting to see the outcome of the Mason inquiry.

Senator SANDY MACDONALD—We do not have any official record of an HMAS *Sydney* signal being received?

Mr Olson—Not to my knowledge.

Senator SANDY MACDONALD—When you say a station which would retransmit the Q signal nearby, what do you mean by that?

Mr Olson—Possibly Perth radio, because in his postwar book the German said that, after they sent it, Perth radio acknowledged it. I have not been able to find any evidence of Perth—like the Applecross station—acknowledging it. The station at Geraldton received some of that signal and asked vessels at sea if they had anything to report. They received nothing, but I think that was—

Senator SANDY MACDONALD—How would that be a way of communicating with Germany?

Mr Olson—We have got cases where, if a nearby vessel had received a raider report and was not sure that it was going to be picked up by the authorities, that vessel would repeat it at full strength so that a naval establishment would hear it—either *Harman* or Singapore or Colombo. It is possible that the Germans transmitted a weak signal or a reduced power signal, meant to deceive the cruiser, in the hope that someone else would receive it further away and repeat it at full strength and that that full strength signal would be picked up by Germany.

Senator SANDY MACDONALD—Following along from that, as to the evidence from existing records, I want to ask about the amount of information we have from the interrogation. When you were speaking earlier, I think you said that you felt there was a considerable amount of interrogation done, that it was done with a degree of veracity, and that the story that was prepared and submitted to the government and naval board was satisfactory. It seems to me, from looking at the amount of material available about the interrogation, that there is not a lot of written material, not a lot of written record about the interrogation process.

Mr Olson—The file I have seen is three inches thick, and that is just the testimony of the Germans. Some of the earlier statements the Germans made were used by the authorities in trying to establish what happened. They subsequently got all the Germans, and there was a program of how they were going to be interrogated and what they were to be asked. By this stage, the *Sydney* was gone; they had already conducted the search. They did not find her, and it appears that trying to find out what happened to the *Sydney* was not the critical issue.

Once the proper interrogations were begun at Harvey or wherever the officers were interned, they were more intent on trying to find out as much about raider operations and supply ships so that they could perhaps bring another one down or capture the supply ships. So there is a lot of information, but there is not a lot explaining particularly what happened.

Senator SANDY MACDONALD—Methods of interrogation probably were not as

sophisticated in those days as they are now.You were mentioning earlier the board of inquiry and the fact that we have not been able to find any evidence of it. Do you consider that a search of any other records held in London might be of importance to the inquiry? Do you think that there are any other records anywhere—whether they be in Holland, Japan, France or Germany—that may shed some more light on what happened, and that a further approach should be made to those governments?

Mr Olson—The board of inquiry is, I believe, worth pursuing because, if one was conducted and it was done correctly, there may be an explanation as to why *Sydney* was lost. Generally, the report prepared by Eldridge shows how she was lost but not why. The naval board did not appear to come to any sound conclusion as to why *Sydney* was lost. A board of inquiry was, to my understanding, conducted to ascertain why a vessel was damaged or why it was lost so that it would not happen again.

While the Eldridge report says, 'This is what happened, and we have got reason to disbelieve the Germans', there is no explanation as to why the vessel was lost. There is no criticism of the procedures, Admiralty instructions, how the vessel was commanded or whom it was commanded by, so I think there should have been a board of inquiry. It would have explained why *Sydney* was lost in such a manner, and may have had recommendations as to what should be changed so that it did not happen again.

If we have no evidence of a board of inquiry here, except in the war cabinet minutes and notes and so on, then at least a copy, a duplicate, should have been sent to London; and so it is possible that a copy exists there. I do think it is important that that matter be followed up.

Senator SANDY MACDONALD—I do not know whether you were here this morning when Mr Ryding gave his evidence. His submission is that the only reason that the *Sydney* would have approached so close to the *Kormoran* would be, he believed, because the *Kormoran* had thrown its hand in and had raised the white flag. Do you support that theory? And, secondly, do you believe that the mystery surrounding the *Sydney* will only be resolved if the wreck is found?

Mr Olson—I will take the second part first. No, I do not think the mystery will be fully resolved by simply finding the wreck alone. I still believe that a proper archive search and, more importantly, a proper interpretation of the archive documents to explain what happened has to be done as well. And perhaps a board of inquiry, if one can be found, may answer those questions. What was the other part?

Senator SANDY MACDONALD—The first part of my question really revolves around the hypothesis of what actually happened on the fateful night.

Mr Olson—My recent work has been concentrating on Admiralty instructions and procedures. From the start of the war, the Admiralty was issuing instructions to its

commanding officers to capture enemy merchant ships because, even from the start, there was a shortage of merchant ships and, as the war progressed and Germany concentrated on sinking Britain's and the Allied merchant fleet, the shortage was becoming worse. So there was this continuous stream of instructions coming out of the Admiralty saying, 'We need to capture any merchant ships and raider supply ships, if the opportunity presents itself.'

One of these instructions on the importance of capturing enemy merchant ships was issued on 4 November 1941. I believe that may have had a bearing on Burnett's actions. If he considered that he had a suspicious vessel and had ruled out the possibility that it was a raider, he would have acted on his instructions from the Admiralty and tried to capture her, and that involved coming in close, getting an anti-scuttling party across and trying to seize the vessel.

The Germans, for their part, were doing their best to scuttle their ships if they thought they were going to be captured. So, by this stage of the war, the Germans had a pretty good idea of what was going on. Their blockade runners and supply ships would scuttle when approached, and it is possible that Detmers, knowing that this was a procedure, may have waited in the hope that the *Sydney* would close in order to try and capture her and, at close range, he had all his weapons available.

Senator SANDY MACDONALD—You state that the government must show that it is sincere in its attempts to locate the *Sydney*. What are your main criticisms of the way in which the government has responded in the past?

Mr Olson—Mainly it is that lots of the individuals who have been doing research for several years now—well before I got into it—have been trying to get answers, either from archives or from the navy itself or from the government as a whole, and they have not really been getting a lot of support. Whether it is through their own approach or through the answers they have been getting I am not sure, but, to my way of thinking, there does not seem to have been much effort by the Australian government to resolve this issue until fairly recently with the forming of this subcommittee.

Senator SANDY MACDONALD—We were speaking earlier of the unknown sailor on Christmas Island. Do you support the exhumation of that body, if it could be found?

Mr Olson—Yes, I do.

Senator SANDY MACDONALD—For what purpose?

Mr Olson—If nothing else, hopefully to establish the identity of that person. If he is not from the *Sydney*, he is from somewhere.

Senator SANDY MACDONALD—How would it be possible to establish his identity?

Mr Olson—I am not up on that side of things. I understand that it was said somewhere along the line that the corpse had a complete set of teeth. A friend of mine is a dentist, and he said the dental hygiene in those days was not very good and so someone with a full head of teeth was very unusual. If Navy dental records are still in existence, we may be able to narrow the field, just from the teeth. I believe that DNA is an option, provided there are enough relatives of crew members who can supply DNA samples to compare, but I am not really sure on that issue.

Senator SANDY MACDONALD—I asked a number of other people who came before the committee, including Navy, the people who were responsible for Christmas Island and those responsible for war graves, this. If I were the minister and you were trying to build a case to advise me to go ahead and exhume the body, what would be your best case? You have not convinced me yet. Yes, DNA testing does work, but there is no certainty that there would be enough material left to test. The question then is to test a close relative of the other 645 sailors. We were also told that there are detailed medical records of only something like 56 people on the *Sydney*. It is a very long shot, and I would like to be persuaded that we should do it. Can you build a good case for me?

Mr Olson—A couple of years ago when I was looking into this particular aspect, I was led to believe that the navy's records were quite complete. It surprises me to hear that they are not.

Senator SANDY MACDONALD—I think a lot of them went down with the vessel.

Mr Olson—I was not aware of that.

Mr DONDAS—They have not got good records.

Mr Olsen—Say no more. I do not know what I can say to convince you. In Western Australia we do have the maritime museum people who are skilled in trying to identify people who were on vessels like the *Batavia*. I have been told from an independent source that some of the skeletal remains can be traced even now, 300 years on, through DNA to surviving family members back in Holland. In the past six months there were the remains of an American airman recovered, I believe, in Vietnam, and he was identified by DNA. The technology is there, as well as the possibility of finding items in the grave that may shed more light on it, perhaps—clothing or shrapnel. I do not really want to get into the argument of bullets in the body, but it is possible that there may be a bullet in the grave.

I believe that the opportunity is there, if we have enough evidence to show that Oldham was incorrect in his conclusion that the float could not have come from the *Sydney*. I think we do have enough evidence to say that he was at least in error in not pursuing the matter to its logical conclusion by having that corpse examined. Given the opportunity 50 years on, we should try to identify that corpse.

ACTING CHAIR—I agree with you. I have one final question. What would you feel was an appropriate way to commemorate the *Sydney* and her crew?

Mr Olson—I heard someone here say, 'The truth.' I really do not think this will ever go away. We know what happened to the *Titanic*. We know how she was lost; but the *Titanic* is going to be around for a few years to come. I believe the *Sydney* will be the same. Even if we find the wreck tomorrow and fully explain her loss the day after, in 12 months time people are still going to be saying, 'I wonder if that was really what happened?' I do not think the mystery will ever go away, but I think we should be doing as much as we can, while we can, to establish where and how she went down, and to answer some of the other questions.

Senator SANDY MACDONALD—I acknowledge what you say about 'the truth'. You do not have to give us a lecture on the truth; there is a time and place for all these things. What would be an appropriate commemoration?

Mr Olson—This was a term of reference; I did not respond to it in my submission. I am not really sure. We do have a commemorative wall, I believe, up Carnarvon way—which seems to be quite remote. I am not really sure. Perhaps at the end of the day, a full documentary could be made, if we find the wreck—as Ballard and Co. have done with the *Titanic* and the *Bismarck*—something to that effect, something that people can see and understand rather than just having a service.

ACTING CHAIR—As we have no more questions, thank you very much indeed for appearing before us today.

[3.13 p.m.]

LOANE, Mr William John, 65 Tunnel Road, Swanview, Western Australia 6056

ACTING CHAIR—Welcome. You are appearing in a private capacity?

Mr Loane—Yes. I am an amateur naval historian, with about 35 years experience in research.

ACTING CHAIR—Thank you. We have received your submission and have accepted it for publication.

Mr Loane—There is a supplement, too.

ACTING CHAIR—Dealing first with the original submission, are there any additions or corrections that you want to put on the record?

Mr Loane—Yes; it is to do with four pages in relation to this matter, an overseas trip I made four months ago to Norway, which I have information on, and also on ongoing telephone calls to Japan.

ACTING CHAIR—Are there any amendments to your original submission?

Mr Loane—No.

ACTING CHAIR—Is the supplementary submission quite separate?

Mr Loane—Yes.

ACTING CHAIR—All right. Would you like to make a short opening statement? You can paraphrase what is in the supplementary submission.

Mr Loane—I have been studying this for 20 to 25 years. In more recent years I have been to Japan three times, mainly researching a book I have written recently on the *Koolama* incident. However, in dealing with the Japanese business, my source of information in Japan was Mr Hideki Hayashi. He is also an amateur naval and military historian. I have also corresponded with two other naval and military historians in the Japanese Institute for Military Research, and also with another gentleman, Mr Kawano, who in fact has also dealt with Senator MacGibbon.

From what I can grasp from all this, there was absolutely no Japanese involvement in this incident. I have been to the top with this. Mr Hayashi in fact has a long military history in his background. One of his two uncles was General Moritama, who was actually found guilty of war crimes in the last war and was gaoled; he committed harakiri 15 years ago. The

general's brother was Captain Moritama, whom I met in 1991. He was second-in-command of the aircraft carrier *Akita* in the Pearl Harbour action. He and Hideki Hayashi, between them, went to the top to try to find anything else on this that has been lost or laid down in Japanese archives, and there is absolutely nothing at all—absolutely nothing.

During my research on Captain Detmers and the action between *Sydney* and *Kormoran*, I took an overview and I read every book about every Raider captain in both wars, everything that has been written about their activities. I do not believe Captain Detmers was a Nazi, although I believe that certainly there were Nazis on board.

From my investigations, I would like to suggest that we might even look a little further, at what happened three days after the *Kormoran* affair, when *Atlantis* was sunk by Captain Oliver in the *Devonshire*. In that engagement, a U-boat was actually involved. It was refuelling from *Atlantis* when along came Captain Oliver in the *Devonshire*. But Captain Oliver did everything right. He attacked and eventually sank *Atlantis* from long distance, but not before he sent his Walrus aircraft out to fly over *Atlantis*. The pilot's report really settled the fate of *Atlantis*, because it was certainly not the ship that it was purporting to be. We could also look at what happened to Captain Manwaring in the *Cornwall*, when he eventually sank the German Raider *Pinguin*, but not before the *Cornwall* was badly damaged. For this, Manwaring was cautioned by the British Admiralty, but the blunder actually led to the *Cornwall* living to fight another day.

There is just one thing here. We all know about rumours and allegations and innuendos. If we look at the *Atlantis* business again—and a U-boat was involved in that, albeit a German U-boat—on 23 November 1941, we are looking at the three days after the *Kormoran* and *Sydney* business. For morale purposes, this could have been displayed over every Allied newspaper this side of the black stump. When word got around after the *Kormoran* and *Sydney* action, possibly a rumour could have spread that, just as a U-boat was involved in the *Atlantis* debacle, a submarine could also have been close to the *Kormoran* at the time. That is only conjecture on my part.

Again, when Captain Farncomb on the *Canberra* sank the *Coburg*, he stayed at a safe distance, but he overdid the number of shells he used. Captain Burnett was Deputy Chief of Naval Staff at the time, in 1940, and he actually initialled Farncomb's report. So, in theory, he should have known what to do, if in a similar position with a strange vessel.

This actually brings me to the *Kormoran* and *Sydney* encounter. Last December I went to Germany but, due to bad weather and another engagement, I did not have a chance to interview any *Kormoran* people. But my luck changed when I went to Norway—this again was in the middle of December last year—when I was introduced by my son to a Mr John Gunnersen.

Gunnersen was Australian born of Norwegian parents. He was a crew member during the war on HMAS *Broome*. At war's end he went back to live in Norway. In 1948 he was in

Kiel in Germany. The allies actually split up between them the spoils of war: any remaining ships that belonged to Germany prior to the surrender. In lots of cases, they got not only the ships but the crew as well, because there were seamen hanging around everywhere.

Gunnersen was an engineer on a former vessel that was geared up to be a raider, one called the *Nordmark*, which was in fact a sister ship to the *Kormoran*. He there met a former crew member of the *Kormoran*, one Gerhard Karl Mitslaff. They became lifelong friends. Many times over the years, Mitslaff told Gunnersen the story about the *Sydney* and the *Kormoran*. Very briefly, this is the way Gunnersen told it to me.

The *Sydney* got in much too close to *Kormoran*. Captain Detmers was purporting that his was a Dutch ship, the *Straat Malakka*; but, being unable to relay the secret call sign to *Sydney*, he realised his time was up. Although Mitslaff's position was as a petty officer, he was in an engine room crew and did not see all of the action. He was in fact called, after the conclusion of the main battle, to come back up on deck. What he saw he described as pandemonium.

He saw the *Sydney* passing to the stern of *Kormoran* and gradually shifting away. He also indicated that there was so much debris on the water between the two ships that you could have almost walked between them. He was only giving this as an example. The *Kormoran* could not have inflicted this much damage on a ship of war had it not been a close encounter. Mitslaff further claimed that he and other crew members were very well treated as prisoners of war in Australia. Gunnersen claims that Mitslaff always told the same story in relation to this battle, and he believes it was a true account of what he had seen.

To summarise, in the 35-odd years I have been studying naval history—20 of these in researching this terrible tragedy—I have come to the conclusion that Captain Burnett did allow someone to bring his ship too close to the *Kormoran*. I have reached this conclusion because of the eyewitnesses. I believe that the crew was not all a pack of Nazis—although, no doubt, some were. True and just people generally come forward if they have witnessed a tragedy. We hear and see this in our courts and on our televisions and radios daily. I believe that this is now happening with the former *Kormoran* crew members, if people will listen to them and approach them in the right way.

I believe the corpse found and buried on Christmas Island should be exhumed and DNA-tested for the sake of the next of kin. I am not a scientist, but my wife actually is a medical scientist. The gentleman who was talking to you before indicated what I was going to say. You could also look at what they are doing today with the supposed remains of the former royal family of Russia. I will not go into that one, but DNA testing certainly could help in this matter.

I am also of the opinion that no-one has really ever taken any note of the tactics used by Detmers. Like his methods or not, he was a razor-sharp fighting seaman who was getting the real thing regularly. In other words, he was out finetuning his crew in a combat situation

a lot more times than could Captain Burnett, who was only relying on exercises to keep his crew up to scratch. Detmers also had the element of surprise, as another gentleman said earlier.

There have been many examples of why *Sydney* got in too close. One instance is not a firm one, but you could throw up the fact that the *Kulmerland*, which formerly serviced *Kormoran*, was in fact of a similar size and bulk to it. Captain Burnett could possibly have taken this as just a supply ship for raiders and not necessarily as a raider itself.

I can only make an educated guess as to the pandemonium which was on board *Sydney* after these first few salvos plus a torpedo from *Kormoran* ripped the heart out of her. It could be assumed with a fair degree of certainty that the chain of command was likely down to a petty officer or able seaman, after a very short time. However, I cannot understand why distress signals were not picked up, as it is fairly obvious messages did get through, but were either conveniently lost or at least not taken seriously by incompetent operators.

The idea of *Kormoran* survivors in their leaking lifeboats, rafts and rubber dinghies shadowing a burning warship, waiting for it to blow itself to smithereens, and systematically murdering any survivors, to me does not warrant any serious consideration. Imagine these boats being rowed or sailed—we have not had explained by what method they were chasing *Sydney*—and being spotted by somebody still alive on *Sydney*. I am sure that the Australian crew would have got hold of the first machine gun and finished the Germans off.

I would have imagined that Detmers, after they abandoned ship, told his officers in charge to head the boats due east at 90 degrees and get to landfall as quickly as possible. If some claimed that Detmers was a Nazi and murdered members of *Sydney*'s crew, why wasn't he brought up on war crimes? In the two wars, there was only one raider captain ever charged with war crimes. That was a Captain Rucketschell in 1948. He in fact died in prison.

I would like to believe that the armchair and telephone researchers would do as I have done and get out into the field and research this. They should go to these countries—Japan, Germany and possibly UK—and conduct interviews with eyewitnesses, check them out, delve into the archives of these countries and root out the facts for themselves.

You may also be interested to know that Captain Detmers actually returned to Fremantle in either the early 1950s or 1960 as a master of a large merchant sailing vessel. In fact, this was recorded in the *West Australian*. If doubt existed regarding his activities during this battle, why wasn't there some official move to grab him as a war criminal? I do not seriously believe that he would have returned to the scene of the crime.

I believe that, like all good prize fighters, *Sydney* dropped its guard in this action. I would also like to appeal to certain interested parties in this matter to show a degree of decorum, to refrain from bigotry and hatred of the Germans and Japanese, and to do all for the sake of the Australian seamen who died in this battle, so that their next of kin may rest a

little easier and go on and believe that their loved ones fought a fair fight. Otherwise, I believe the biggest loser in this terrible tragedy could be the truth itself.

ACTING CHAIR—Thank you very much. Of course, irrespective of what Mr Gunnersen and his friend Mr Mitslaff had to say about it—and there is no doubt that the *Sydney* got in too close—what your submission does not do is give the rationale for that and, bearing in mind that Mitslaff was below decks and came up afterwards, that still does not categorically answer the assertion that Mr Ryding made this morning as to how that actually happened.

So whilst there is no doubt that they got in very close, what is not explained, even in your submission, is why that happened and whether there were white flags going up when it actually happened or whether it was a tactical error on the part of Captain Burnett. It is interesting to hear that, but it does not seem to me to answer those questions categorically that that is exactly what happened.

You talk in fact about Captain Burnett and a blunder. We also heard this morning Mr Ryding—and you may not have been here—give a very interesting and a very illuminating personality thumbnail sketch of Captain Burnett. He said that when they went for the battle practice target that in fact it was treated with action stations and all the rest of it. That does not gel with a Captain Burnett who would, to me anyhow, come in without some sort of other ruse being exercised by an undoubtedly very clever raider captain. There is no doubt about it: he was a very clever raider captain.

It is a personal view, but I have to say that as a personal reaction to what you have written. We thank you for that. I think it has added more ammunition, but it still has not answered the basic question as to why they got in as close as they really did.

Senator SANDY MACDONALD—Yes. I agree with the Acting Chair. I guess it would be very hard to get an answer to that, but—

ACTING CHAIR—What knowledge do you believe Captain Burnett had about the *Kormoran* being in the Indian Ocean—and the *Kulmerland* as well? Do you believe that he knew both of them were there? What knowledge do you think he had of the situation?

Mr Loane—We will never find the log, no doubt. I doubt it, and I can only give a summary of the book I wrote about what was given to local State Shipping Service captains. I have one with me. Captain Heppingstone, of course, was not with the Western Australian State Shipping Service during the war. But they were only given briefs as to what intelligence was brought in and secreted here in Fremantle. I doubt very much that he would have known—certainly not the name of the raider.

Senator SANDY MACDONALD—Would he have known the raider was in the Indian Ocean?

Mr Loane—I would imagine that he possibly would have.

Senator SANDY MACDONALD—Are you making the assertion that he believed that the *Kormoran* was the *Kulmerland*, and that is why he moved so close to it?

Mr Loane—I am suggesting; as I say, we are all suggesting. I do not believe Captain Burnett would have come in close had he known it was a raider, but I am giving a suggestion.

Senator SANDY MACDONALD—The Acting Chair asked what other ruse might have been available to Captain Detmers to entice the *Sydney* in as close as it did.

Mr Loane—In fact the standing orders of any raider captain were that you never tackled a ship of war, and, if they did, really there should have been only one outcome. Unfortunately, the tables were turned. It was a tragedy. I can only say that Detmers, as you said yourself, was a very clever man. He knew exactly what he was about, and I think I said in my later submission, or my appendix to it, that he was a razor-sharp fighting seaman.

The history of his naval service stands for him. He was a former commander of a huge sailing vessel, the *Herman Schermann*, which is about 30,000 tons. We know that he was having engine trouble with one engine and that he was down to half speed at best. He was just using delaying tactics, in the way they normally used to do. Obviously, they would send up a man, a seaman, dress him in very ordinary clothing and tell him to run up return signals in flag situations and to deliberately stall for time by making them wrap around the masts so that the ship asking the questions could be confused—in the hope that the ship, in this case *Sydney*, would get fed up with this blundering around with flags and go on its merry way.

Senator SANDY MACDONALD—I was just going to say that here was the raider, on the evidence that was provided by the raider's crew, heading towards *Sydney* and suddenly, when they sighted the *Sydney*, they wheeled away into the sun. They first increased speed, and, of course, into a setting Western Australian sun, it would have been very hard to see the raider. Then they reduced speed. Obviously, on one hand he was very skilled: he had rehearsed it probably many times before in his mind, he had been at sea for a long time and he had thought through all the possibilities of meeting an Allied ship; but, at the same time, you would expect that those actions and what he did in not responding to the signals, et cetera, would cause red lights to flash in Captain Burnett's mind.

Mr Loane—Yes, I agree.

Senator SANDY MACDONALD—I just wonder what other ruse he could have applied that would have made Captain Burnett—

Mr Loane—I spoke with Gunnersen for about 2½ hours on that particular evening.

He is a Royal Australian Navy seaman. I do not believe that Detmers ran up a white flag. I believed he stalled for time until he was asked the secret code signal, and then that was it.

We have recently had a report in a supplement by a naval historian friend of mine from Sydney, David Kennedy. He wrote a very good article in a magazine supplement of the *Australian* newspaper three or four weeks ago, outlining a letter which was given up to a niece of a former *Kormoran* seaman in Adelaide. That article is very interesting.

Senator SANDY MACDONALD—It has been recently published.

Mr Loane—Yes, it has been recently published. That man, as he indicated, was run down to the wire. According to the gentleman by whom this report was written, he was in the gunnery department, directly beneath the bridge of the *Kormoran*. He heard and saw everything. He also remembers quite clearly that man saying, 'They've asked for our call sign, comrades, and we'll have to give it to them.' That is when they opened fire on HMAS *Sydney*.

Senator SANDY MACDONALD—What was the basis of the suggestion that Detmers was reported to have said that he expected to be tried as a war criminal?

Mr Loane—Has Detmers written that?

Senator SANDY MACDONALD—No, but somewhere in our submissions we have had that. I just wondered whether you knew anything about it?

Mr Loane—I have read similar things and I believe that this committee is doing its utmost to sort out this mess. I believe now is the correct time to stop looking at second-hand and third-hand information. I do not believe that ever happened, because I do not believe he said it.

ACTING CHAIR—Go back to the evidence that Mr Ryding gave this morning. What we tried to do in his evidence was to get some sort of thumbnail sketch of Burnett as to what sort of a tactician he was and what his attitude would be, albeit that he was relatively inexperienced in that ship, although he was one of the most experienced Australian seamen officers. What Mr Ryding said in terms of a battle practice target indicated, for my part anyhow, that here was a man who did not take any chances. I do not have the answer either, but it does raise the basic question as to what ruse Detmers could have exercised to get that ship. He probably knew he could not outrun her and that his time was up.

I agree with you that there was a mixed signal as to whether Detmers was a Nazi. Some say he was, but I think that is questionable. Maybe he did what was being suggested this morning with the white flag, to get them in close and then open up. Nobody, including Gunnersen and friend, was in a position to see exactly what was going on at that time. I am not deriding what you have said, nor the evidence that has been given by Mr Gunnersen in

good faith. I just put a big question mark as to whether he did something that was absolutely persuasive and that caused a mistake on the part of Captain Burnett.

I think there have been too many criticisms in a number of quarters, and I agree with you that they have been quite uninformed, that Captain Burnett made a major tactical blunder. I do not think that anybody could say that. He was faced with a commanding officer who was a very experienced raider captain and who knew what he was about.

Senator MARGETTS—I am a bit concerned. My understanding is that we should be questioning the people giving evidence. I do not know that it is the role of the committee to be giving opinions about the values of people's evidence or what is right and what is wrong.

Mr Loane—Perhaps I could answer Mr Taylor's question. I do get the drift of what you are getting to.

ACTING CHAIR—What I am trying to do is get the evidence out.

Mr Loane—From what Mr Ryding said this morning—and I wrote it down here—he feels there was no reason to send out the Walrus aircraft over *Kormoran*, if *Kormoran* had run up a white flag, and that no other vessel would do similar. In fact, Captain Oliver did just that in the battle with *Atlantis*. He sent his Walrus over. He did a copybook move. That attack was absolutely perfect. He had doubts about *Atlantis* from a distance and he immediately sent across his Walrus.

His Walrus aircraft reported back that the steer end of *Atlantis* could not have been the *Polypubus*—that is, I believe, the vessel it was purporting to be. It could not possibly have been. Captain Oliver then sent a radio message to Freetown and Freetown reported back, but by that time he had already started pounding *Atlantis*. There is an example there that contradicts what Mr Ryding was saying this morning. Even if a white flag was up, possibly Captain Burnett still should have sent his Walrus across, and not the boarding party, checked it out by air and then reported back. After all, they were probably in a stagnant position. Once the white flag went up, they probably would have been only just under way.

I believe that not sending the Walrus over really signalled the end of it. I believe that Detmers could do only what he could do. If you read about the psyche of the raider captains, they never surrendered. There is one case that I know of in World War I where they scuttled a ship in Africa and then set up a community down a river whose name I forget. They were firing on everything. These former raider captains lived for about two months like animals. The ship went down. They stripped it clear of armaments. That was the *Kronsberg*. Their psyche was different from that of a Royal Australian Navy captain.

Senator MARGETTS—There is a range of theories. There are a number of people with particular pieces of evidence—some corroborated and others not. We have evidence that has been given today about sightings off Port Gregory. We have a number of different

indications that there might be some information which could be useful. Do you believe that, if a number of the opinions were peeled away, evidence could all be brought together into a jigsaw that would be able to tell us what did happen?

Mr Loane—I do know Ed Punchard and I hail his efforts and his committee and also this committee for what is going on. The only problem I have is that we might get splinter groups springing up everywhere, each group meaning well but harbouring their own information. I think that the committee perhaps might send a message out to all and sundry and everybody here to use this as a think-tank to compile everybody's theories and sort the hay from the chaff. I do not believe there is a lot more hidden away in Japan. I have gone right through Japan and I have also visited the public records office in London. I would believe that the German side could be approached on a government-to-government basis to check out what reports they have. Germany may not even know what they have.

ACTING CHAIR—Do you agree with Mr Olson that pursuing the board of inquiry is an important thing to do, if we can, through the Admiralty?

Mr Loane—Yes, I cannot see anything wrong at all.

ACTING CHAIR—You reject any suggestions of Japanese submarines. That has happened about three or four times.

Mr Loane—Absolutely. It is not worth while pursuing. Stick to the main game.

ACTING CHAIR—Thank you very much indeed. You have been very helpful.

[3.44 p.m.]

McDONALD, Lieutenant Commander Ean Lawrence, 32 Watsonia Road, Gooseberry Hill, Western Australia 6076

ACTING CHAIR—Welcome. In what capacity are you appearing before the committee?

Lt Cmdr McDonald—I appear as an individual, although for some years I was what my confreres call the convener of the *Sydney* research group, which in fact was an extremely loose group of people, all with independent opinions. We thought that was wonderful anyway, because none of us in this business knows what it is all about. If I may, I would like to make a statement.

ACTING CHAIR—Let me just get the formalities out of the road first. We have received the submission and the supplementary submission, and both have been authorised for publication. Are there any amendments, additions or deletions for those two written submissions?

Lt Cmdr McDonald—There should be three submissions: a first, a second and—

ACTING CHAIR—A third one just arrived recently—all right. Do you want to make any additions or deletions to any of those?

Lt Cmdr McDonald—Not as such, no.

ACTING CHAIR—Okay. I invite you to make a short opening statement.

Lt Cmdr McDonald—Thank you. I would like to say that, as one who has pursued the truth of this for over 40 years, I am very happy to be here. I am delighted that about 100 Australians—it may not be known—have seen fit to take the time and the effort to make submissions, which now run to nine volumes plus. I think today's attendance is indicative that thousands and thousands of Australians are interested in the results of your inquiry.

We must look first at the official story that has been extant for all those years since about 1957, I think, when Hermon Gill put it all together, and note that it was only Gill's opinions. He was completely free, I understand, to write what he thought; the navy had no control over him, as far as I know, and he dictated the terms of his histories. I believe that my submission in the early pages demonstrates the fallibility of Gill. Whether it was deliberate or not, his history falls down in many ways. If it falls down in a few ways, to me it totally falls down.

When I look at the submission by the defence department—in volume 8 of your submissions—there are something like 136 pages of what I consider smokescreen. It is a

tissue of the same old incorrect facts; it has not changed in 50 years. All the questions addressed to parliament over the many years always brought the same reply: 'We believe the official story, which has stood the test of time.' As I say, that is about the understatement of the century. Enough said on that one. I believe my supplementary submission—the third one—will demonstrate where that story falls down. It falls down in many ways, and so, again, it falls down in total.

I believe your inquiry must look beyond the so-called available material. The word in your terms of reference is 'available'. What happens if the material is not available for one reason or another? Either it is not available because someone made it unavailable or, simply, because it is in a box somewhere that nobody has turned up. We can appreciate that there must be masses of material that, unfortunately, have not been able to be searched through. There must be material in documents in the UK, the USA, Holland, Hong Kong, and all sorts of places—and I gather there is some in New Zealand—that will assist us all in discovering the truth. In my submission I try—as I hope you appreciate—to examine the situation as a simple sailor trying to analyse what happened from the evidence that I was able to gather.

I feel, first of all, that the location of the battle as stated by *Kormoran* is a total fallacy, and therefore I think the whole *Kormoran* story breaks down. I do not believe that Captain Burnett and his crew were caught by incompetence or unawareness but by stealth and trickery, which of course is the prerogative of a raider—even beyond the so-called awful rules of war. We fought wars where, supposedly, there were rules: if you killed a guy one way, that was fine; but if you killed him another way, it was not.

I cannot claim authority over the strategies at the top level of the hierarchies of Britain and the US, in particular—after all, I was a boy at the time and did not really know what the hell was going on, anyway—but over the consequent years I have discovered a great deal. I also can claim no authority on the Japanese involvement, but there is so much evidence that has appeared that indicates Japanese involvement that I have to keep an open mind on that and be ready to accept that the Japanese were involved in one way or another.

Shu Ah Fah was an interesting case. He was the Chinese chap who was captured by the *Kormoran* in one of their sinkings, and he and three of his confreres were kept on board as laundrymen. By the way, one of them was killed, I understand. According to Jack Sue's evidence, the Germans killed one of those Chinese on the way down from Carnarvon. But Shu Ah Fah survived and gave evidence to our interrogators. He exposed the German lies, firstly, by reference to the location; and, secondly, by reference to the *Kormoran* calling in at Japanese bases in the Pacific, which has not come out. I cannot understand why Shu Ah Fah's evidence has not been taken more notice of. It is there; it is in our records.

Commander Bagley, in his submission—which you have—demonstrates further evidence of Japanese complicity which was given to him when he travelled with the Germans that were picked up by the *Aquitania*. Captain George Meadows has a fascinating story—he would have been here today: he is in hospital, unfortunately; he will be making a submission

and I trust it catches us in time—which might indicate that it need not necessarily have been a Japanese submarine involved but that it could have been a German one.

John Doohan will offer, I am certain, masses of evidence of that nature. There is plenty more, and I think evidence is still coming. I find it fascinating that even this morning a friend rang me from Queensland with another snippet of information. It keeps coming out of the woodwork.

I have heard there has been massive lobbying by certain commercial ventures towards funding searches and aftermaths. You mentioned the cost this morning and received answers that people are talking in terms of $3 million to $5 million. I believe that searching of this nature can be done by our own navy. We have a hydrographic branch which is perfectly capable, surely—with the right equipment, maybe—to search the area infinitely cheaper. It can be justified by the fact that that section of coast between about Port Gregory and Carnarvon has not been properly resurveyed for some reason or another. A resurvey by our naval people, devoting all their modern technology to it, may well turn up something towards the truth of this matter.

I am very admiring of the positive contribution by Mr Lindsay Knight; you have this in the last submission. Lindsay Knight is a man who has done aerial searches with some gadgetry that he has either invented or developed—I am not certain which—that shows some fascinating results, one of which is that there are three wrecks around the Abrolhos. I am certain Glenys McDonald pricked up her ears when she heard that. Mr Knight did not make a lot of noise seeking funds from everybody else; he simply got on with the job and went out there and did his searching.

I see the main purpose of locating *Sydney* or the sunken vessels—either of them—as possibly resolving what happened during that action, rather than as providing a memorial at sea. After all, we know where *Sydney* went down—she went down off our coast. We know the memorial to her gallant crew is the sea itself. The memorials are the memories of the crew. You will probably ask me the question, 'What do I think would be a suitable memorial?' As I listened to your questions earlier, I conceived that, if we confirmed this body on Christmas Island, what greater thing could there be than to bring it back and establish it somewhere, even in Canberra, our national capital, as the memorial to the *Sydney*. The whole crux of the inquiry, to me, centres on a simple fact. Australia wants to know, and it does not believe what it has been told. It follows then that your real challenge as a committee of inquiry is to get to that truth. Thank you.

ACTING CHAIR—Thank you very much. That was very helpful. You would have heard about the board of inquiry documentation. Do you agree that it is very important that we try to obtain that?

Lt Cmdr McDonald—Yes, indeed it is. Mind you, I am not going to comment on that. I have not studied it and I feel that I should apply my expertise to areas where I feel

expert.

ACTING CHAIR—How can you say, on the basis of your written submission, that there is any substantive evidence of Japanese involvement? Give us a thumbnail sketch of the evidence which would support that assertion.

Lt Cmdr McDonald—Statements by one or two of the German crews—and you have heard evidence of that; the presence in and around Darwin of two Japanese mother ships—perfectly capable of supplying submarines at the time but never referred to in any of our official documents; Shu Ah Fah's evidence that they went up to the Japanese bases; and the possibility, say, of George Meadows's evidence or concept of Japanese subs manned by Germans. It is a fascinating concept. I cannot substantiate it at all. The whole point about this, as we must all appreciate, is that we are all guessing.

ACTING CHAIR—Including, I have to say, the Department of Defence. I am interested in the comments that you made about the submission from the department. It is very clear, from our initial hearing in Canberra, that they do not have the information either. That is no fault, in many ways, of the Department of Defence. It is a historical situation where perhaps we were the outpost of Empire, as I said earlier on today, and command and control, as we now know it, just did not exist. Do you agree with that?

Lt Cmdr McDonald—Pretty well.

ACTING CHAIR—I heard some of the mutterings over on my left here, and we will have the opportunity to listen to some of that evidence later, but the only point I was making earlier on was that it is very easy to point the finger in a particular direction, but it is very difficult to attribute things specifically to any person.

Lt Cmdr McDonald—Yes. I would like to speak in defence of Captain Burnett. I did not serve with Captain Burnett. He was, however, a contemporary of Captains Collins and Waller, and I have stated in my submission that Captain Burnett was of equal seniority and experience to Captain Collins when he sank the *Colleoni*. And Captain Burnett had been a commander of *Sydney* for some time, so he was not a stranger to *Sydney*. He was not an inconsequential man. He was a man of stature, and regarded as such.

Also, I have mentioned in my submission Tom Fisher, who lives locally—and I am sad that Tom has not come forward with a further submission—and who was, by the way, bridge messenger and therefore on the bridge during all the action stations calls. Tom regarded Captain Burnett quite highly. He said he was an efficient, caring and conscientious man, and that he went to action stations at the drop of a hat. There was no question of him being casual about acquaintances with other ships or what have you. I therefore feel that a lot of the deprecation of Captain Burnett is quite nasty, and I am very upset and angry about that.

I will add a couple of other things. Debris collected apparently around the Port Gregory area has been referred to, but there was also debris collected around Dirk Hartog Island around that time—or said to have been washed up. It is interesting that the last witness spoke of debris between the two ships that they felt they could walk on. Where did it go, or why wasn't it picked up? In my submission you will find that when I analysed the tracks of the searching vessels consequent to the action, it became very apparent that they were searching anything up to 200 miles behind the drift of any possible debris.

There has been a lot of reference to the battle position. For the layman, when we are talking about latitudes and longitudes, 26 is a parallel of latitude and 111 is a line of longitude. It was common naval practice—certainly in our navy and, I would think, in the German navy—that, when a ship like the raider wanted to report his position back to base, he said, 'I am at 26 111.' There is only the 26 degrees there. There is not 26 degrees 15 or 111 degrees 32. It is 26 degrees 111 degrees. That relates to a square between the 26th latitude and the 111th longitude—the top left-hand corner. So that told his base that he was in that roughly 60-mile square, and that would be enough for them. That was his daily report. I gather he was reporting daily and was tracked by DF daily along this coast. So any suggestion that Captain Burnett did not know *Kormoran* was in the area is, I think, a lot of nonsense.

ACTING CHAIR—You heard Mr Edwards make the point before lunch that finding the wrecks would be an opportunity to, in his words, 'bring them home spiritually'. With regard to what you said about the body on Christmas Island, you could do that and then convert that into a commemorative place.

Lt Cmdr McDonald—Yes. That, to me, would suffice.

ACTING CHAIR—Don't you agree that it would be a good thing if the wrecks could be found and that they could be brought home spiritually?

Lt Cmdr McDonald—No, I do not think so. As I mentioned in my preamble, I only see the finding of the wrecks as a confirmation or an indication as to what happened during the action. Were they out at 111 degrees of longitude—which I do not believe at all? Were they down at 28 degrees of latitude, off the Abrolhos? It would pin the story down, or destroy the German story or confirm it—I do not quite know which—but it would help, in my opinion, to resolve the story of the action itself. I do not think it is important to find the wrecks, except that if we could find them—and they must be preserved as war graves; there is a sacredness about them, both the German ship and the *Sydney*—and if we could have a look at them by sending down a video, we would find out what really happened. Was *Sydney* torpedoed from both sides, for argument's sake?

Mr DONDAS—You say the British Admiralty must contain some records. What kind of records do you think they might have?

Lt Cmdr McDonald—The Australian Navy was directly under the command of the British Admiralty. Take the question mentioned earlier about a board of inquiry. Surely the British Admiralty would want to know as much as possible about *Sydney*'s demise for pure record and for the information of the next guy who might have got caught in the same situation.

Mr DONDAS—We have had witnesses here today tell us that they have been to England and they have not been able to get any information.

Lt Cmdr McDonald—So what. We know that there are British records that are held and are secret. Michael Montgomery would give you evidence on that one. He has been to Admiralty searching for things and cannot find them. They are not available. There are supposedly files on 75-year hold. I think our chairman actually used the same words earlier this morning.

Mr DONDAS—So you think the British are holding something back.

Lt Cmdr McDonald—Yes.

Mr DONDAS—That is interesting.

Lt Cmdr McDonald—On the question of other records, I believe *Sydney* got out signals and that they got to *Harman*, and my submission mentions details of that. I believe they were received in Canberra, and somehow or other they were suppressed over the next 24 hours. You can come up with all sorts of reasons why they would have been suppressed. If those signals were heard in *Harman*, they would have been heard in Hong Kong, in Africa, at Simonstown, in Trincomalee and possibly in London, because the receiving stations were all listening out on the same frequencies and those signals were literally bouncing around the world. Somebody would have picked them up.

Mr DONDAS—You say that you are not happy with the terms of reference. Why not?

Lt Cmdr McDonald—Only with the word 'available', that is all. I think you can appreciate that it is fine to have available records. I have no complaint whatsoever with the Archives—any assistance they can give us, they do. But what have they got to give us? And, as I said, even if the documents are not necessarily secreted they may be lost or stored.

Mr DONDAS—Item 2 in the terms of reference refers to all relevant archival material available from Allied and former enemy forces.

Lt Cmdr McDonald—The operative word is 'available'.

Mr DONDAS—Do you think it might be a good idea for the committee to write off

under a parliamentary seal to see what information they may have that you have not been able to get hold of?

Lt Cmdr McDonald—Whereabouts to?

Mr DONDAS—To the United Kingdom.

Lt Cmdr McDonald—Why not? You have to put this in a very broad situation. If it were suspected that there was Japanese involvement—and it was suspected, and I am using the word 'suspected'; Admiral Crace suspected Japanese involvement—if that had been the case 14 days, or whatever, before Pearl Harbour, the British hierarchy and American hierarchy were not yet ready to tackle the Japanese because the United States people would not have come with them. So you have to look at that broader strategic level, where you have Churchill and Roosevelt having agreed to knock off Germany first and Japan later. If Australia was involved with Japan and had to individually declare war on Japan, so would Britain have done, and that would have upset the program. I think you have to look at that very broad world strategy picture.

ACTING CHAIR—In terms of the use of that word 'available' in relation to archival documentation, et cetera, do you think there is something that, under the UK 75-year rule, is just not releasable at this time?

Lt Cmdr McDonald—I do not know. But surely our government is in a position to lay down the law with the British government and say, 'We demand access to documents relating to our own people.' I do not think the British have the right to withhold information that concerns us in any way.

ACTING CHAIR—I think that we do have some documentation on exchange between the previous Chief of Naval Staff and the First Sea Lord, don't we? I think that indicated that they had nothing they could add—which perhaps gives the impression that they might not have anything to add that they can release. Your reference to 'available' is important, and I thank you for that. Just what we can do to apply pressure on that, we will have to wait and see. Are there any other final comments that you would like to make before you leave?

Lt Cmdr McDonald—Yes. Perhaps there are one or two I ought to make. If you look at my submitted diagrams, sheet 6 locates the German supposed sinking position—which, by the way, you will appreciate is in 4,500 metres of water. I really believe that Detmers very cleverly put it in that position, thinking that in 1941 there was no way that anyone would ever get down to that depth; whereas the technology today allows us to do so. From Detmers's position—or a number of them, since he and his officers gave three or four positions, and you will see them listed there—then there is the position that I come to, which is only about 40 miles off Steep Point in only about 300 metres.

Interestingly, for No. 14, Sam Hughes was referred to earlier. Sam, I think, is still the director of search and rescue for Australia in Canberra. Sam's first estimate was No. 14, which is only about five or 10 miles from my own. But his later position has gone about another 50 miles westward. The positions of Kim Kirsner, whom you heard earlier, and Ted Graham and so on, are all on a line about 258 degrees out from Steep Point, as you will see on the diagram. So a search out along that line and perhaps to 10 miles either side of it should check every one of those positions.

ACTING CHAIR—You are saying that that is working outwards from the shallow water?

Lt Cmdr McDonald—Yes, working out from shallow water. If Lindsay Knight's gadget is as good as he claims it is, then one run out and back by Lindsay's machine would apparently pick up the lot of them.

Now I will refer to sheet 5. The Nazi Von Gosseln and Captain Detmers of *Kormoran* were each in those two positions labelled VG1 and D1. They were either side of *Aquitania* when she picked up the other crew. That was on a line confirmed—and my other stuff supports this—by many people. The drift from where I think the action was, or where the sinking position of *Kormoran* really was, was to the north-west for four days along exactly the same line that *Sydney* survivors would have drifted for four days. To me that suggests something. I hate to think of it, but it does. Why then, over the next four days, were Detmers and von Gosseln able to make it so rapidly and positively due east, when they had been drifting for four days to the north-west?

If you look at the little diagram you will see—and you, sir, would no doubt understand a set and drift problem—that there we have a set to the north-west, but an actual made-good course to the east. How the hell did they do that? They had to be towed at over two knots during those days, in order to make it.

ACTING CHAIR—They defy all the rules of relative velocity, absolutely.

Senator MARGETTS—Have you any confirmation that there still exist prisoner interview files which are regarded as confidential?

Lt Cmdr McDonald—I heard that a week or so ago. I may even have mentioned that in the submission. I have now discovered that there is a particular file with prisoner information and that, in that file, there is a comment—I am pretty certain it was by Commander Rycroft, who interrogated the Germans—in a private letter to Admiral Crace, saying that he believed the Germans had all been coached in their story. I am afraid that I have got to keep that reference confidential because it was given to me by someone who was a civil servant and who feels that there is still restraint on civil servants under the Crimes Act and that they must not reveal such information. So I have got to simply rely on that person's integrity, take it as you like. I have got no further substantiation of it.

Senator MARGETTS—Are you of the opinion that there is signals information in Australia that would still be helpful?

Lt Cmdr McDonald—Most certainly, but not necessarily hidden or secretive, just simply because it has not yet become available.

Senator MARGETTS—We had an interesting day in Canberra, and I could summarise it thus: the Defence Signals Directorate said that everything relevant has been made available and that they were not archivists, and the archivists said that they have seen everything that has been made available but that they are not analysts. Would that indicate to you that there might still be information that could be useful amongst that kind of signal information?

Lt Cmdr McDonald—I think so. Where are all these signals? You have heard of Bob Mason and his story, no doubt. Where have those signals got to? Where have all those facts got to? There are similar references by Malcolm Young in Fremantle—the chap in Flinders and the young man in Tasmania. Where have they all gone? They all refer to the same thing. As Mrs McDonald said earlier today, we do not like to use anything until it has been corroborated. So, sure, here I have a corroboration of signals from four different directions at least. Where are those records?

ACTING CHAIR—It figures that you understand the problems for this committee. As Dee has said, one is saying on the left hand and the other is saying on the right hand, and it all falls down the middle. That is a problem for us.

Mr DONDAS—Earlier in your oral submission you made a statement that a *Sydney* research group was made up of people from all over Australia, all with different ideas and their own views. But in the conclusion on page 184 of our submission, or page 37 of yours, you state:

None of its members have any connection with a recently formed SYDNEY "Trust" a seemingly commercial and/or politically oriented association

Could you elaborate on that?

Lt Cmdr McDonald—This is under parliamentary privilege, isn't it?

Mr DONDAS—Of course. I am interested because we had the trust here earlier today, as you know, and the trust has many honourable Australians as trustees. We have members of parliament from both sides: Tim Fischer, Kim Beazley, Mr Smith, Mr Filing—

Lt Cmdr McDonald—First of all, there are politicians, and one of the patrons is Mr Beazley, who went to record on television only a week or two back saying how wonderful it was that he was patron of the HMAS *Sydney* Foundation Trust. And yet we have got him on

record a year or so ago saying, 'I want nothing whatsoever to do with the *Sydney*. I do not want to hear another thing about the *Sydney*.' Fine! The chairman, Ed Punchard, has a lot of qualifications and experience, but it is generally known that it was Ed Punchard that made the film *No Survivors?* I found that a very oversensationalised and nasty film about the *Sydney*, showing bodies in the water eaten by sharks, and so on. What is Mr Punchard's real agenda? Maybe he is interested in another film.

We have representatives of commercial organisations in that trust whose business it is to search for sunken vessels. We have politicians and, as I read *Hansard* of a couple of years ago, I do not trust what their agenda is, or what their actions or statements are.

Mr DONDAS—Come on: be a little more specific.

Lt Cmdr McDonald—No. I do not think that I need be any more specific. I am going to ask questions tomorrow in the open forum about whether, when the trust does achieve its funding and so on, it will call for tenders for the searches.

Mr DONDAS—We will leave that until tomorrow.

ACTING CHAIR—In your papers, you claim that German survivors in many ways followed the *Sydney* survivors. I guess that is what you are referring to in terms of the 'made-good' in the diagram: that the German survivors followed *Sydney* survivors and systematically killed them. Is that what you are saying?

Lt Cmdr McDonald—I hate to say it, but the evidence suggests it to me.

ACTING CHAIR—That is the point. Yet you also have, it would seem, a Japanese submarine torpedoing *Sydney*.

Lt Cmdr McDonald—No. I said always that I found difficulty in accepting that.

ACTING CHAIR—That was my question as to whether there was some sort of contradiction between those two.

Lt Cmdr McDonald—Mind you, I want to say also that I can forgive the Germans, believe it or not, if they did machine-gun the *Sydney* chaps, because we were all in a war and it is not a pretty business. Enough said.

ACTING CHAIR—Okay. Thank you very much indeed.

[4.23 p.m.]

BOURNE, Group Captain Cyril Albert Victor, 86 Wattle Street, Tuart Hill, Western Australia 6060

ACTING CHAIR—Welcome, Group Captain Bourne. My understanding is that you wanted to give evidence under oath, but that you have now reversed that. Do you understand the situation?

Group Capt. Bourne—Yes.

ACTING CHAIR—The subcommittee has received your submission and supplementary submission and—

Group Capt. Bourne—Additional submission.

ACTING CHAIR—one this morning, which the committee will accept as evidence. Are there any amendments or corrections to those submission that you wanted to record in the *Hansard*?

Group Capt. Bourne—No, Mr Chairman.

ACTING CHAIR—Thank you very much. Would you like to make a short opening statement?

Group Capt. Bourne—Yes. I am a hands-on pilot who flew with the No. 14 Squadron during the war in searches for the German raider that we knew as the *Steiermark*, which was known to be operating off the coast of Western Australia. I later took part in searches for HMAS *Sydney* and for the survivors of the battle. In fact I personally searched from the south-west tip of Western Australia up to 150 miles north-west of Exmouth.

I personally have researched many of what I shall call the cover-ups that I struck during my research into HMAS *Sydney*. I have submitted eight papers which are in exhibit 3, which have not been published, and about eight more supplementary papers which have been published, dealing with certain aspects of the search and what I call the cover-ups.

There are two most important things I have to comment on. Ean McDonald mentioned papers. In fact, he was talking about file 1/15/2. That should contain the Westhoven report. She wrote that report in 1945. Gill recommended to Commander Long that it should not be published, and it was not published. It was placed on an intelligence file and never published. Mr Straczek downgraded that from secret to unclassified in 1992. It must be recalled that Gill was writing his history of the Royal Australian Navy at that time.

Third Officer Westhoven's report stated that the first air search took place from

Rottnest Island on 23 November 1941, whereas Gill said it took place on 24 November. On the weekend of 22-23 November, my crew were on stand-by at Pearce. That morning we were told to carry out a search south of Rottnest for HMAS *Sydney* to find out her ETA Fremantle. We were not to send a negative sighting report, which is usual, if we did not find her. We were to take down any messages she might pass to us, including her ETA, and we were to pass it by secure means to the DNOWA. We were not to challenge or investigate any other shipping—which was most unusual, because we always did. We carried out that search and came back to Pearce at about 1.30 on that day, Sunday.

ACTING CHAIR—I am sorry to interrupt you but is that the 22nd or the 23rd?

Group Capt. Bourne—It was Sunday, 23 November. These dates are most important. By 4.15 p.m. that afternoon a message was received at Pearce alerting us to the possibility of a search to sea for HMAS *Sydney*. At 5.15 p.m. it was confirmed, and by 8.00 p.m. everyone had been forewarned for a maximum effort search next day.

If you look at Mr Summerrell's Guide No. 3, he writes up the Westhoven report. On page 17 the Westhoven report says:

When she had not arrived on November 21 a signal was sent to Navy Board and on November 23 an air search was carried out from Rottnest.

In Guide No. 3, Mr Summerrell changed that. He put:

. . . and on November 23 [in fact November 24] an air search was carried out from Rottnest.

Here is the assistant director of the archives changing a document which was entrusted to him for safekeeping. I complained to the minister, Mr Alston, about this. However, if you look at the official Defence Department report by Mr Straczek, you will find in volume 8, page 1844, the first paragraph:

An initial air search was commenced on 23 November.

I wrote to him asking him to provide evidence for what he was saying. He wrote back to me and said, 'That statement was incorrect.' Here you have a senior officer, entrusted by the minister to write the story on behalf of the Defence Department, admitting that what he has stated is incorrect. I wonder how many other items in his submission are incorrect.

I have stated many times that there was a cover-up during wartime. This is understandable and acceptable, but the cover-up has continued ever since. This is an up-to-date account showing that the covering up is still continuing today. These two officers are attempting to write out of history the fact that I carried out an air search on Sunday, 23 November. The importance of this is that the *Aquitania* picked up survivors at 6.00 a.m and that at 7.45 a.m. my captain, Ron Fletcher, came to me in the mess and said, 'Off your bot, son; we have a job to do.' So, he had been told by 7.45 a.m. that we had to do a search.

There are many more cases that I have quoted in all my documents. Probably the most glaring case is the fact that most of the records that I can find—I have to use them because I am clutching at straws, as are most other people—are being used by other people. However, we know that they are suspect, particularly the SWACH record. That is quoted by everyone as wonderful. In fact, it only survived because it was in private hands for many years. When it was recovered by the archives out here, it was sent to a crowd called Perth Microfilm—the document itself, 500 pages, a big book—to be put into microfilm. These people sent it to Holland to be turned into microfiche.

There were other big firms in Perth—Kodak, 3M and Hanimex—quite capable of turning that microfilm into microfiche. However, it was sent to Holland. I submit that it was sent to Holland to let the Dutch intelligence know the contents of that book had been sanitised and they had nothing to fear.

As for the Dutch connection—as you will see from what I wrote in my exhibit—there was a secret Dutch military unit in the Port Hotel at Port Hedland from 1941 to 1945 with a radio room on the top floor. We have photographs of the people concerned. Warrant Officer Soenarto was in charge. There were six of them who could speak, read and write Dutch, English, German and Japanese. They had an aerial, with a dish, outside the rear of the Port Hotel, with another aerial near the sea. This is the Dutch connection. Mr Straczek also said there was another facility at Broome. The Dutch connection has a lot to do with HMAS *Sydney*. In fact, Commander Salm was the Dutch liaison officer. He came over here to interrogate the prisoners because he could also speak German.

Very briefly, there is another glaring example. You may have heard of Ahmat Doo, the Malay stockman who was supposed to have found the boats on the beach. If you read Montgomery and read Winter, they both give different accounts of how that boat was found on the beach. In fact, Winter's book has a correction in front which throws doubt on her own story. In fact, no-one in Carnarvon knew anything about those boats on the beach until Flight Lieutenant Harold Cook landed and told a man from Dalgety's. I forget his name; I have a short memory. He went to Gascoyne Traders and organised three vehicles. Eventually, they found Sergeant Anderson, the police sergeant. Then Harold Cook took off with Dr Piccles and Sergeant Anderson and headed northwards. They were met by a Mr Baston, who had orders to turn Cook back.

What I am saying is that all this story of the stockman finding a boat on the beach is wrong. You have to see that beach to understand that, first of all, there was the beach, there was a boat on it and there was nearly a mile of sandhills, then there was an escarpment and then, about half a mile the other side of that, there was the well and the hut where these people were killing sheep. In fact, it is a good story to sell books, but Harold Cook found those two lifeboats.

In fact, what is so bad about it is that the 14 Squadron operational records showed that he took off at Geraldton at quarter past eight and landed at quarter past 12, whereas, in

fact, he was in Carnarvon. There is no doubt about that. We all took off at about half past four on the search but he waited for another aircraft. Flight Lieutenant Nicholas came up from Pearce carrying Flight Lieutenant Menear, the operations officer, and operations staff and equipment. They spent 10 minutes on the ground before taking off for Carnarvon.

When you read these documents you have to be very careful because they show that Flight Lieutenant Nicholas went up to Carnarvon and back in 12 hours flying time. In fact, the safe range of a Hudson was only six hours. In fact, he went up and back. He was back on the ground at Geraldton that afternoon because my aircraft and his aircraft were both sent out to carry out a square search for the *Trocas*. In fact, for the third time that day we returned on one engine. He was recalled because the *Trocas* had given a signal. In all the research you are doing you have to be very careful when you read it because, quite frankly, most of it is very suspect.

ACTING CHAIR—On that one, even in wartime there were lots of mistakes made in terms of record keeping. But they were not purposely made. Would it be reasonable to say that?

Group Capt. Bourne—Yes, that is quite true. There were plenty of mistakes made, particularly by newcomers, shall we say, to the air force. I agree with you on that. But some mistakes are not mistakes. For example, what we call the crystal ball signals were sent with the time of origin of those signals about four hours before the actual event happened. Obviously these things have been inserted in the record later on.

In fact, Mr Eagles wrote to me from northern Queensland a while ago asking me to explain anomalies in the squadron's record—times of origin of signals and times of receipt. He is a signaller and he could not understand them. I had to reply that I could not understand them either. That is why I said the record is suspect.

ACTING CHAIR—The reason I raise that is that you have indicated that this Dutch military signals unit was in the Port Hotel in Port Hedland or Carnarvon. Can I put it to you that there was no Port Hotel at that time in the 1940s; it was the Pier Hotel.

Group Capt. Bourne—In Carnarvon?

ACTING CHAIR—Yes, in Carnarvon. The Port Hotel was in Derby.

Group Capt. Bourne—I certainly cannot remember that.

ACTING CHAIR—That is the information we have been given, that the Port Hotel was in Derby.

Group Capt. Bourne—Could I say that Mr Gwyn Williams at the Air Force Association Village is curator of the Air Force Museum. At the time, in 1945, he was

manager of MacRobertson Miller Airlines in Carnarvon. He saw the radio room and met these people. He has photographs of them. In fact, when I showed these photographs to Vic Richards, who has submitted items from Carnarvon, and he saw the photograph of a tank in the background he said, 'Yes, that is the Port Hotel at Carnarvon.'

ACTING CHAIR—Okay. So you are sure it was the Port Hotel in Carnarvon?

Group Capt. Bourne—As sure as I can be from what others tell me.

ACTING CHAIR—That is the point I am making—so others tell you. I am not being in any way disrespectful or critical of you, but the point I am trying to make is that it is reasonable that mistakes get made over time.

Group Capt. Bourne—It is reasonable, but all I saw of Carnarvon at the time, I went down to the gaol yard and souvenired a life jacket. I have been in Carnarvon since then, quite frankly, and I have been at the Port Hotel since then. I think I stayed there many years when I flew back and forward up the coast. But my memory is hazy on that.

ACTING CHAIR—Okay.

Senator SANDY MACDONALD—What were your normal flying duties at Geraldton?

Group Capt. Bourne—I was not based at Geraldton, I was based at Pearce in 14 Squadron. I served in 2 Squadron at Laverton as a maritime reconnaissance pilot. I learned the trade there, and then I was transferred to Pearce in September. At the time I was a junior captain. You more or less worked up through second pilot to junior captain.

Senator SANDY MACDONALD—When you flew out on 23 November, were you flying from Pearce or from Geraldton?

Group Capt. Bourne—We were flying from Pearce. We flew from Pearce to Rottnest. We set course from the lighthouse on Cape Vlamingh and flew along the normal shipping lane, which was about 15 miles to seaward. This was shown on our aeronautical chart, which in fact was a Mercator's projection. The Germans on board the *Aquitania* had said that the battle took place 130 miles south-west of Fremantle. The logical thing for us to do would have been to go down and search that area with a square search, but we went down a parallel track search. We were nowhere near that area.

Senator SANDY MACDONALD—One hundred and thirty miles south-west of Fremantle would be what—600 miles south of where it is believed to have drifted?

Group Capt. Bourne—Or 700. In fact this is unbelievable: a raft could not drift 700 miles in four days. But this was the fictitious battle area that the people gave. Therefore, that

trip which I did seems unbelievable. In fact, until I found out many years later that the interrogation said it was 130 miles south of Fremantle, I could never understand why we went in that direction when the *Sydney* was approaching from the north.

Senator SANDY MACDONALD—When you said you returned on one engine on a number of occasions, was that because you were short of fuel?

Group Capt. Bourne—No, the 90-octane fuel up the coast was all carried in drums, and of course the water in the drums subsided to the bottom. All the 90-octane fuel was water contaminated. The first lot of fuel we got by road convoy up at Carnarvon was contaminated by oil. They had put petrol into oil drums.

You have got to read between the lines. When Wing Commander Lightfoot in his report said the Hudson behaved admirably, they did too, once we learned how to overcome this. The fact is that, first of all, we tried using carburettor heat to burn the water out of our carburettor, but then we found that, by manually hand pumping from 14 pound up to about 28 pound a square inch, we could more or less force the fuel through the carburettor, risking bursting the diaphragm, but we learned how to cope with it. We were losing engines. Three times that day we returned on one engine which, when you are out 200 or 300 miles to sea in those days without any search and rescue facilities.

Senator SANDY MACDONALD—In an Anson?

Group Capt. Bourne—No, in a Hudson.

Senator SANDY MACDONALD—I was going to say, in an Anson you would not get back. What do you believe was the military knowledge of the raider being in the Indian Ocean at the time that the *Sydney* was sunk? As a maritime marine pilot, what was your sort of anecdotal belief about German raider activity in the Indian Ocean?

Group Capt. Bourne—I go back a long way. I came over from Launceston to Melbourne in a ferry. We were escorted by a destroyer because five ships had been sunk by mines in Bass Strait and at the time the public did not know this. When I came to 2 squadron later on I found out the mines had been laid by a German raider. In the newspapers there was an account that 400-odd people had been captured and put on board the *Orion* in a battle in the Pacific. They subsequently landed on an island north of New Ireland and were then flown down to Townsville. This was about a one- or two-day wonder at the time. It did not last long. We knew in our 2 Squadron that there were raiders in the Pacific Ocean. When I came over here in September, I learned also that there was a raider known to us as the *Steiermark* in the Indian Ocean. I never heard the name *Kormoran* until the Germans reached the gaolyard at Carnarvon.

Senator SANDY MACDONALD—Do you have any belief or knowledge about the radio traffic that may have issued from the *Kormoran* and the *Sydney* at the time of the

action?

Group Capt. Bourne—There was one old and frail DF operator in Perth called Colin Chaney who had manned the station at Pearce. He said he heard a Q signal which caused great excitement amongst the headquarter staff. With reference to what I have said in the Canberra inquiry, a director of signals stated they had received no request for any material. I did write a letter requesting material from the Defence Signals Directorate and I got a reply signed by Karen Black, who was the personal assistant to the minister, stating that the Defence Signals Directorate claimed that they had no records in their archives. I have that letter on file.

Mr DONDAS—Does that include the signal that was sent to Darwin? In your submission you mention the fact that there was a signal received from the *Sydney* which stated, 'Calling Darwin, fire fore and aft, abandoning ship.' Where did that signal go?

Group Capt. Bourne—That is on the SWACH record detail which is available in the archives. That was sent down by Squadron Leader Cooper from Geraldton at the time. In fact, it is recorded in the SWACH record, but then, later on, you had this more or less countermanded by a statement that this was a PMG signal from Sydney in New South Wales to Darwin. Of course, I cannot accept that because we had built an overland telegraph line for the purpose of communications. The PMG did not need to send a signal to Darwin. I know Squadron Leader Cooper. In fact that is in handwriting in the SWACH records, that signal.

Mr DONDAS—Do you reckon they tried to cover up the fact that a signal was sent by the *Sydney*?

Group Capt. Bourne—I believe so. As a matter of fact, I am researching the SWACH record because I personally think it is suspect in many ways. Originally I thought that it was missing for many years. I thought that it had been sent to Navy and that they had rewritten these 500 pages, which is a big thing. Now I am leaning towards the fact that there were probably temporary logs kept during that period which were put into the logbook—in other words, so they could be sanitised. This is speculation. I am very sorry to say this, but when you are researching the *Sydney*, you become very suspicious, like me. You do not trust anyone, you do not trust anything, and it is a terrible way to become.

Mr DONDAS—I have seen 114 pages of your submission, so no doubt you know what you are talking about.

ACTING CHAIR—On this question of your flight and the change to the square bracket of the 24th, that is disturbing. What is the real significance? What are you trying to say?

Group Capt. Bourne—I am trying to say that my flight on the 23rd is trying to be erased from history by Mr Summerrell and Mr Straczek.

ACTING CHAIR—But what is the significance of that? Why would they do that?

Group Capt. Bourne—The total significance is the fact that the *Aquitania* broke radio silence. That is why I was sent south because that morning the Germans in the lifeboats of Detmers and Gosseln both said they saw the *Aquitania* in the morning five miles and eight miles away. That afternoon they were circled by an aircraft. It was a strange aircraft. It was a yellow and black aircraft and Bunjes said it was a bomber. In fact, it was a Fairey Battle. This was a single-engine aeroplane, mind you. You did not fly 200 to 300 miles out to sea on a Sunday afternoon for fun in a single-engine aeroplane because there were no search and rescue facilities in those days.

My flight, together with this flight by a yellow and black Fairey Battle confirms that the *Aquitania* did break radio silence. There has been a colossal web of deceit woven around the *Aquitania*. I travelled on the *Aquitania* from 10 January 1942 with the 2/4 machine gunners up to the Sunda Strait. I know what I saw on the *Aquitania*—all her armament and the layout of the signals room.

ACTING CHAIR—On that one, did you lose all your logbook?

Group Capt. Bourne—Unfortunately my logbook was lost at Palembang in Sumatra. Actually a Japanese light tank and a group of men came to the edge of the airfield. We had to take off in a hurry and we flew to Bandoeng but all our clothing and stuff was up at a little place called Glumbang about two or three miles away. I wrote to the Japanese military history people asking had they found my logbook or was it in some museum or anywhere. After a while they wrote back to me and said that all that material was destroyed after the war.

ACTING CHAIR—In your submission you said the RSL:

. . . does not believe the official account of the alleged battle between HMAS Sydney and HSK Kormoran . . .

What does the RSL believe?

Group Capt. Bourne—I put a motion to the RSL seeking the truth on it.

ACTING CHAIR—But you said the RSL:

. . . does not believe the official account of the alleged battle between HMAS Sydney and HSK Kormoran.

That is in your submission. I do not suppose you can speak for the RSL, but I was just interested in what their view is.

Group Capt. Bourne—The RSL have accepted the need for a search for the truth,

but I cannot recall writing that paragraph. If you say it is there, I have to believe it.

ACTING CHAIR—I guess I am asking you to comment on behalf of the RSL, which you probably cannot do anyhow.

Senator MARGETTS—We all know that are reasons during wartime for information not being available. What do you believe is the reason for information being changed and changed even more than 50 years on?

Group Capt. Bourne—I personally believe Air Commodore De La Rue acted on his own behalf when he sent these two aircraft out, which rather caught the navy by surprise. I do not want to speculate on the actual battle because I am not an expert on it. I am afraid I cannot go further than that.

Senator MARGETTS—If what you are saying is that information has been deliberately changed and changed over time and there are endeavours still today to keep information from the public, what would you say is the reason? What was to be gained from changing or altering or withholding information?

Group Capt. Bourne—I personally believe that, in the first place, it was a preplanned battle for the *Sydney* to sink the *Kormoran* and that the *Sydney* did sink the *Kormoran* but that something then happened. I accept the theory that there was some outside interference, and for this reason I believe and accept the theory of the Japanese submarine involvement. Also, the fact was that this was two weeks before the Japanese entered the war, and it was a highly political situation that I am not qualified to discuss. Perhaps John Doohan can explain this later, in his statement.

Senator MARGETTS—If it had been a planned operation for the *Sydney* to sink the *Kormoran*, why would the crew of the *Sydney* not be at battle stations at that time?

Group Capt. Bourne—I know nothing about being at battle stations. I just know that, in the air force, we challenged ships from a safe distance. We always challenged from a safe distance. I believe also that the ships would do the same: it is commonsense to challenge from a safe distance. When we closed on a ship to identify it, we did so with our rear turret gun trained on the bridge: and if we saw flashes of gunfire, the rear gunner would suppress it. It was as simple as that. We simply did not trust modern cargo ships of 7,000 or 8,000 tons: they were disguised raiders, in our opinion—every one was.

ACTING CHAIR—Can I just come back to my comment before about the RSL? In your RSL Involvement submission, you talked about agenda items 46 and 47 and said:

This means that by accepting the need for search for the truth on the loss of HMAS Sydney, the Returned and Services League of Australia does not believe the official account of the alleged battle . . .

It is signed 'C.A.V. Bourne'.

Group Capt. Bourne—Good Lord!

ACTING CHAIR—There you are.

Group Capt. Bourne—I will have to retreat behind my favourite excuse. I employ a secretarial agency that is shocking; however, I accept that I did not edit that properly.

ACTING CHAIR—Okay. Do we have any other questions? I can see Air Commodore Garing watching you very carefully today.

Group Capt. Bourne—Air Commodore Garing? I could tell you something there, but I will not.

ACTING CHAIR—All right. Thank you very much indeed for your evidence.

[5.00 p.m.]

DOOHAN, Mr John William, Secretary, End Secrecy on *Sydney* Group, 21 Bartlett Street, Willagee, Western Australia 6156

HEINRICH, Mr Juergen, 18 Warwick Road, Sorrento, Western Australia 6020

HITCHINS, Mr Lee, 23 Robins Road, Kalamunda, Western Australia 6076

ACTING CHAIR—Welcome. I understand that Mr Heinrich and Mr Hitchins are appearing in a private capacity. Is that correct?

Mr Hitchins—Yes. I wish to make a statement about the role of the RAAF direction finding stations.

ACTING CHAIR—Okay. We will come back to that. Mr Heinrich, what is your connection with the *Kormoran*? Are you the son of one of her seamen?

Mr Heinrich—No; an uncle of mine was on the *Kormoran*, but he did not survive.

ACTING CHAIR—Thank you. Do you wish to speak now, or do you want to leave it until tomorrow?

Mr Heinrich—I am not quite certain what John wants me to corroborate but I am happy to corroborate, if I can, what he wants to say; but I wish to have a separate speech tomorrow.

ACTING CHAIR—That is fine. We have received the submission. Is there a supplementary submission?

Mr Doohan—I have done a supplementary submission, but I would ask you to accept it tomorrow.

ACTING CHAIR—Yes, let us leave it until tomorrow. First of all, do you have any additions or corrections to that first submission?

Mr Doohan—I have a correction where I quoted a document on the *Aquitania* in my first submission. It makes no difference whatsoever to my submission, but it happens to be a document of 1942 instead of 1941. There was a mix-up at the archives in Victoria Park—which I can explain about tomorrow, if you like. It makes no difference whatsoever to my submission, but there is a correction, which will appear in the supplementary submission that I will bring tomorrow morning.

ACTING CHAIR—We have about 50 minutes this afternoon and we can pick up the

rest tomorrow. Would you like to make a short opening statement?

Mr Doohan—Yes. I convened the End Secrecy on *Sydney* Group about six years ago and I have also been with the *Sydney* Research Group. Because the trust was here this morning, I think it relevant to what we are saying that I was also about the second member of the trust, before it became a trust, and so I know a fair bit about the trust.

I have not put any notes together, because I intended it to come straight off the top of my head. I made a few notes as people were talking and I would like to make this into an initial preamble. Firstly, though, in relation to the *West Australian* this morning, which made mention of me and said that I believed that Roosevelt was fooled by Churchill—

ACTING CHAIR—I have not read it yet.

Mr Doohan—It is on page 32. I would like to say that I have definitely never held the view that Japanese involvement was concealed from the US at any time. All evidence points decidedly to the Roosevelt administration actually knowing exactly what they were going to do. You have read my submission and I think you would understand what I am about. I would like to correct that *West Australian* statement this morning. It is totally at odds with what I really do believe.

ACTING CHAIR—No doubt you are going to tell the *West Australian* that, are you?

Mr Doohan—I shall, although they will not take much notice. There are quite a few things I would like to say and I will try to lead into them. I have made notes as we have gone along on certain things to be corrected. For example, when I was muttering a bit, the reason was that I was a little concerned about these under-age World War II experts who actually went to a different war from the one that I went to, apparently. If a space scientist wants to go to the moon, they do not just talk about going to the moon and what they are going to do when they get on the moon. They say, 'Let us get off this planet first.' That is the first move.

What I am trying to emphasise in this inquiry is that if you want to know the truth of *Sydney*—and we all want to know the truth of *Sydney*—you have to start off at the beginning. Like Alice in Wonderland, you start at the beginning—and this is Alice in Wonderland anyway.

What I want to say to you to bring your questioning out is that all we have on the whole of the *Sydney* situation, which I call the *Sydney-Kormoran* affair, is what the Germans told us—our enemy at the time. The Germans are certainly not our enemies these days—absolutely not. They have told us a story on the *Kormoran*. The evidence which I have been plugging along with for quite a number of years—and a lot of other people have too—is that that story is not true. Naturally it follows that you have to go into the basic background to see why it is not true, why it was told in the first place. So I am asking you that, when you

start to question me on my submission, you begin at the beginning.

If I can give some of the beginning now, the story is that *Sydney* was coming down from an escort duty to Sunda Strait, and it was heading in a direct line for Fremantle when it came upon an innocent looking freighter. I know from documentation which you can lead me to, and you have just heard Group Captain Bourne say that he was flying a Hudson, that from the end of October—I know the dates—until about the 8 or 9 November they were looking for a ship called the *Steiermark*, a raider. They did not know its name; they knew it as the *Steiermark*. They had a photograph of the *Steiermark*, they were looking for the *Steiermark* and the *Steiermark*, as you know, was the *Kormoran*—raider G ship 41 was the *Steiermark*.

The point of it is that 14 Squadron, maritime reconnaissance, was actually looking for the *Steiermark*, which was the *Kormoran*, at a time when our official story tells us that there was no raider there, that when *Sydney* would have no reason to suspect that there was a raider there the RAAF was looking for it. The RAAF also had photographs of the *Straat Malakka* in conjunction with it—in other words, they were saying, 'If you are looking for *Steiermark*, keep your eye out for *Straat Malakka*.' This is factual; you can check this out for yourselves.

The thing is that no-one can tell me—I was at sea during the first three years of the war too—that Captain Burnett, on a cruiser, was not told that that there was a raider out there, that someone said, 'Don't tell Burnett; he does not have to be worried about a raider out there.' He knew the raider was there; the air force knew it was there. This is the extent of the cover-up: they knew and Burnett knew.

I am jumping all over the place here because there is so much to tell, but at the same time the HF/DF operation was already in place. I will not go into the details because I will confuse you; I am confusing myself already. The point is that when Burnett was coming down from Sunda Strait he knew what he was looking for. He knew he was looking for *Steiermark*. Whether or not he knew that it was the *Kormoran*, I do not know, but he knew he was looking for *Steiermark*.

The *Aquitania* comes in here. When *Sydney* left Fremantle on 11 November escorting *Zealandia* to the Sunda Strait, on the same day *Aquitania* got into Singapore. She had just come from Trincomalee, and she was coming down to pick up the rest of the 8th Division and take them back to Singapore—5,000 men to reinforce Singapore.

I will just make this comment now: the Japanese did not want Singapore reinforced. You can read Masanobu Tsuji, if you like. He is the man who actually planned the attack on Malaya, Singapore, and his postwar writings will tell you that they did not want Singapore reinforced—you know what I am getting at. In other words, the people who least wanted Singapore reinforced were the Japanese. The Germans did not want it reinforced either because they were Axis partners at that time.

So we have *Sydney*, she has left Fremantle on the 11th with the *Zealandia*, she is going up nice and quietly, she is just on an ordinary milk run, no problem. At the time, incidentally, people thought there was a fifth column here in Fremantle; if you have heard of Colonel Kuring you will know that history. On the same day *Aquitania* comes into Singapore. Her brief was to call at Singapore and be gone in about eight, nine or 10 hours, but she was kept back for eight days in Singapore. The next morning, on the 12th, she was put into the dry dock near Seletar docks in Singapore and she was left there for seven days. On the eighth day she came out, on the 19th, which was the day that *Sydney* was due to intercept *Kormoran*, which she did.

I know that *Aquitania* would never have been in Singapore any more than a few hours, because I was in a ship that was very similar—I was in the *Mauretania* for nine months, one of His Majesty's troopers. We never waited anywhere and we never stopped for anything either. So *Aquitania* was kept in Singapore for eight days until just coincidentally the day that *Sydney* met *Steiermark/Kormoran*. On the seventh day in the dry dock somebody attempted to destroy *Aquitania* in the dock anyway. They started a fire in her cordage locker. Luckily, two Singapore fire engines were called and they managed to put it out. But *Aquitania* was at all times in the sight of the Japanese consulate, a three-storey building over Keppel Harbour. She was under complete surveillance of the Japanese at that time.

What I am trying to say, too, is that we know that high frequency direction finding was going on at that time. Lee is to give some information about the type of operation that high frequency direction finding was at that time. You can see how easy it is to go up side alleys here and confuse you, as well as confusing myself, but I have to get this across to you now. People have said, 'Why would a raider be sending off regular signals so that this HF/DF-ing operation could pick them up?' Barbara Winter has said that we were not reading the raider code. That is not quite right either. People have said we were not reading the raider code, therefore we could not HF/DF them—by 'we' I do not mean me, I mean people like Lee; that we could not read the code, therefore how would we know what they were doing. Well you do not need to; with HF/DF-ing you do not need to read the code. All you want is a signal.

The equipment that Lee was using when he began on it was the Adcock system. It was very accurate, even though it was very new; it was an AWA new product but it was very accurate. He will explain better than I that, if you put down a morse key, with the old equipment maybe you would pick them up, maybe you would not. But with that new equipment, if you had an interception system already in place, like a three-point bearing or even a two-point bearing, as soon as you made that signal, if they were waiting, if they knew you were there—and they knew *Kormoran* was there; they had been doing this for quite some time—then that immediately was caught on the equipment, on the oscilloscope. Lee can explain this better. It put a line across the oscilloscope and that line did not decay for quite some seconds—I do not know how long. In that period of time, they would make that fix.

What was happening with *Kormoran* was that when *Aquitania* went on to Singapore,

Kormoran was waiting for her to come down. She should have been down there about the 15th or 16th, which would put her, in normal course, into Fremantle on the 18th. When she went into Singapore, *Kormoran* would have been waiting for its target. We know she was waiting for *Aquitania*—that is all cut and dried. She was there for nothing else; she was not there to mine, she was there waiting for *Aquitania*. When the *Aquitania* went into Singapore, then immediately the plan would have been put on hold because the target did not leave within 12 hours or so. She was still in there for another eight days. They did not know how long she was going to be there.

Kormoran would have to have been getting a signal every day. She got the signal down to her. Originally, the information would come from the Japanese consulate in Singapore—there was no German consul there then, of course. Either the Japanese consulate was sending a signal down to *Kormoran*—and we believe there were Japanese wireless telegraphy people aboard the *Kormoran* anyway—or else the Japanese consulate was sending it back to Tokyo and Admiral Wenneker, who was the German naval attache in Tokyo, could then, with the Enigma system, have sent a signal to *Kormoran*.

The British and the Americans and even the Australians in Melbourne were reading a lot of Enigma stuff. It did not matter what they sent down, if the Japanese sent it they would have sent it in the diplomatic code, what we call the purple code—you must have heard of the purple code. We were reading the purple code. At the very time that *Aquitania* was in Singapore, the Japanese were setting up the bombing of Pearl Harbour by the purple code. This is all history; this is factual. It has not been told to everybody, but it is factual. You can find it out anyway. I can give it to you myself.

They so trusted their codes and the JN25 naval series codes that they did not believe anyone would ever break them. This is how they were setting up their Pearl Harbour bombing plot. They called it the bomb plot—well, we did, anyway. They were setting it up and we were reading it. So in no way would the Japanese hesitate to send a message to *Kormoran*. But for *Kormoran* to be able to understand that purple code they would have to have Japanese WT people aboard—and there is reason to believe they were there.

But in any event, whatever happened, if it was the purple code, our people would have been reading everything that was going to *Kormoran* anyway. But all *Kormoran* would do was send back maybe only a couple of blips, 'Message received. Understood.' She would have to, otherwise they would keep on sending that signal until they knew their target had got it. So every day she had to send signals back, to whoever was transmitting, that she had received the signal. It is standard practice; you know that yourself.

We get to the last day, the 19th. The last signal that *Sydney* would have got would be a rough area where *Kormoran* was, because *Kormoran* would never have stayed still, naturally. She was at that time 300 to 400 miles off, because they knew that the maritime reconnaissance squadrons, when they did their searches, were going up to 300 miles and no further. So *Kormoran* would have been waiting. It is conjecture as to exactly where she was,

but it is just logic. *Kormoran* was out there, so she would be 300 to 400 miles out.

Sydney would need the signal of the night before. These signals were being taken about 10 o'clock at night our time, Hotel time, and two hours ahead on eastern seaboard time. She would not know exactly where *Kormoran* was. So it is quite logical that if she could know at 4 o'clock in the afternoon—and, incidentally, this is when Detmers said he sighted *Sydney*; that is not true either—she would have a fair idea where *Kormoran* was because *Kormoran* would immediately blip blip back, 'Message received. Understood.' *Sydney*'s own reception equipment would have picked that up; she was practically on the doorstep. She would know pretty well exactly where *Kormoran* was and that would give her time to find her in a block of, say, 30 or 40 miles, before dark. I am jumping the gun a bit, but we know that, in terms of the action, nothing started before 6 o'clock. Perhaps I had better not jump ahead because I will confuse myself.

Aquitania left Singapore at 4 o'clock on 19 November. I have explained why I believe she left at 4 o'clock. She could have left in the morning, no problem, but she stayed until four and then she sent off a signal. The Japanese consulate would have sent a signal off because, naturally, they would be watching *Aquitania*; she was in full view. There is no doubt whatsoever that she would be a matter of business for the Japanese. They are the only ones who could have sent a signal off because there were no Germans in Singapore—there was no consulate. Anyway, I think I have gone far enough and you might like to talk to Lee about that while we are hot on the HF/DF.

Mr Hitchins—I will give you a brief explanation of the HF/DF. The magic term was high frequency cathode ray direction finding. The cathode ray bit is important because, unlike all other systems of DF, you heard the signal, of course, on the speaker and you also had the cathode ray tube in front of you, and the moment you heard a dot of morse or a flash of lightning, you got a streak across the screen. The persistence on the screen, which might have been a second or so, was quite brief but in that time you would have its bearing. You had a cursor you could swing round. You would swing it around on the perceived signal, another one, and you have got him precisely.

At that time, there were direction finding stations at Pearce, Busselton and Albany. There was also one in Darwin, which might be relevant. Later, there were three more stations put up north. I did not make a submission, for which I apologise; I thought I had nothing to offer because I did not arrive at Pearce until five months after this. Group Captain Bourne mentioned an operator, Col Chaney, who received a Q signal. I worked with Col. If he said he received a Q signal, and I cannot see how he would not, then he most certainly would have done so. He is a most conscientious and accurate man.

ACTING CHAIR—With the HF/DF, it was on the display. Was it an intersect or was it a straight—

Mr Hitchins—No, just a straight bearing.

ACTING CHAIR—A straight bearing?

Mr Hitchins—Yes.

ACTING CHAIR—So bearing and distance?

Mr Hitchins—No distance at all—you could not compute that. If you could hear a signal, you would get a bearing on it. But you would need a bearing from another station, of course, to get an intercept, and work it from there.

ACTING CHAIR—Was that done as a matter of course, or was it just that each of the stations did a bearing?

Mr Hitchins—We all would have done a bearing automatically, but we were all connected immediately to our head signals office, particularly at Pearce, of course, where there were receivers all over the place. They were always tuned to marine and aviation distress frequencies.

I cannot understand where all these signals went to. They would have all been logged, and very precisely. Those logbooks were kept. At the end of the war I was down at Albany and the last thing I did was put in the signal logbooks.

ACTING CHAIR—Mr Doohan, if you can go back to the *Aquitania* again, where was she heading when she sailed? If she had delivered the 8th Division, where was she going?

Mr Doohan—She had not delivered them. She was on her way down. This would have been something that was known to the enemy weeks and weeks before, because you just do not come and move 5,000 men out of a division anywhere. Just to explain—I am sure you understand, but maybe people here might want to know: when you are carrying thousands of troops somewhere there has to be a lot of activity in the port or the area you are going to pick them up from—that has to be done—and many people must know about it, of course. Wherever you are taking them to—for example, as in this case, Singapore—you are taking 5,000 men to an island and they have to have billets. Everyone has to know. It would not have been hard for Japanese to find out. Those were things that got around easily.

Aquitania left Trincomalee on 8 November and she was in Singapore on 11 November at 5 o'clock. It is quite clear, from the distance she travelled, that she was doing her full cruising speed, which was 20 knots. When she got into Singapore, all of sudden it was decided she would go on to the dry dock to have her bottom scraped. Why put a ship in the dry dock when she had just come down at full cruising speed? She had no dirt on the bottom; she did not need to go into dry dock. They put her into dry dock. I was in the *Mauretania*, which was 36,000 tons, a little under 10,000 tons less than the *Aquitania*. We were a big ship for the day.

We went into dry dock several times. We went into Bayonne dry dock in New Jersey in the United States. We went there one day and we stayed there a full day, and on the second day, towards the afternoon, we got out. Not only had we had our bottom scraped, we had been painted up to the main deck. And we were being painted by—you know what a stockade is, an American army stockade, American army criminals—hundreds of criminals, and they were not breaking any speed records, as I said in my submission. We got out in two days.

Singapore was a very fast dry dock because you had Asian labour and they were there like flies—there were no problems. Incidentally, we, as large troop ships, came directly under the Royal Navy. We were not kept hanging around places. Ships were too big, and what we were needed for was far too urgent. We did not hang around for eight days playing around a dry dock. So quite clearly *Aquitania* was being kept in Singapore, for whatever reason was going on with the HF/DF-ing—and there was a lot of background here even I do not understand as to why certain things happened. I am talking about Admiralty involvement in a situation that was going on, which I am certain revolved around the coming entry of Japan into the war in 18 days time.

But *Aquitania* was most certainly kept in there to coincide with *Sydney*'s getting into position for the *Kormoran*. I have to jump a bit here. Have you seen Detmers' deck and engine room log? When the Germans from *Aquitania* were sent across to the eastern states, to Murchison prison camp for the other ranks and Dhurringile for the officers, they stayed there until 1945. Incidentally, to take up one of your remarks this morning, I think, about why should Detmers fear war crimes trials or anything else, just before the war finished, around March or April 1945, Detmers and 19 of his officers dug a tunnel and escaped from Dhurringile.

Now, this is a strange business. A man who had been there since 1942, who had been well treated and well fed and who knew the war was nearly over, with all these others decided they were going to get out. They did get out, but they were all recaptured. When they got them all they did a clothing search and a body search, and they found on Detmers his own diary, and it was all in code. It was in the *Kormoran* special cypher, and they broke it.

The story was that they had to send it to London because we did not know how to do it. We did know how to do it, and Defence Signals actually did it themselves. They say they did not do it until 1992, as a matter of fact, and I have got a document here that says so. But they did that straight away, and they found out that it was an overall record by Detmers of the action against *Sydney*. It was all in this cypher. They translated it straight away, and I have a copy of the translation. As a matter of fact, my friend John here also has gone through it for me because it is in German. Even though I had the English translation we checked it as it is in the German as well.

I am jumping the gun here, but this translation, this deck and engine room log, is

terribly contradictory. What Detmers was trying to do was coordinate his deck log with his engine room log and the action. He did not do a very good job. But what he did do was make clear that as soon as *Sydney* opened fire, which was immediately at 5.30, *Kormoran* was immediately hit by *Sydney* shells. It is all there for you to see; I can even give it to you. *Kormoran* was hit by at least one salvo from *Sydney* which took out her whole engine room. She had four engines; not one engine, as a fellow said here today. She had four diesel electrics. They all came onto two shafts.

Immediately she was hit, the engines were taken out, the whole of the pumping system was taken out. The chief engineer, Stehr, was killed straight away; the second engineer, Lieutenant von Gaza, was killed straight away, and one other was killed in the engine room straight away, according to Detmers' record.

Some of those shells hit the bunker tanks next to the engine room, which was full of fine diesel oil, and immediately set the engine room on fire so massively that in the other areas around the engine room, compartmentalised away from the engine room, an engineer rang the bridge straight away and said, 'Can we abandon the engine room? It is gone.' They had no more way on. They were lying dead in the water before the battle. There was no battle—before it even started.

Detmers, in his record, gave instructions right away to abandon the engine room. Also, within a matter of minutes they were abandoning the ship. In the abandoning of the ship, he also said, 'We lowered all our lifeboats.' They were not supposed to be able to lower any lifeboats; they had to throw over a couple of wooden captured lifeboats and then get two big steel lifeboats. You are an ex-navy man and you know you do not carry big steel lifeboats down in a hatch, particularly in a raider, because when you want your lifeboats you want them in a hurry, you want them in the davits.

The *Kormoran* had three motorboats in davits—one motor cutter and the captain's boat with very powerful engines on the port side in the davits, and they also had a steel lifeboat, which is one of the lifeboats they got away in. On the starboard side she had another motorised cutter and she had another steel lifeboat. Otto Jurgensen, one of the petty officers, said they had six steel boats as well as the two wooden boats and a number of rafts.

ACTING CHAIR—Where was the MTB?

Mr Doohan—According to Detmers, the MTB was in hatch No. 6. They had two Arados down there, two Arado 196s. The information from some of the prisoners in the interrogation was that the MTB was carried amidships, just aft of the main deck housing, and covered with a canvas camouflage. I believe that would have been in the water as soon as they saw *Sydney* anyway.

It has been put about that she could not fire torpedoes. She could fire torpedoes. She had three torpedo tubes which she could either fire torpedoes from or release magnetic mines.

You know yourself, from navy experience you would at least know about it, that the German submarines used their torpedo tubes for two things: to fire torpedoes and also, submerged, to lay magnetic mines. But, to answer your question, it was aft of the deck housing.

ACTING CHAIR—It depends if the mines were compatible with the tubes.

Mr Doohan—These motor torpedo boats, which were carried by five of the raiders, were all built to the same specifications. They were all built down on Lake Constance by the Zeppelin works. They were built for special purposes; they were built only for raiders. They were called a leichtes schnell-boot, a light speedboat. Their designation of what we call an MTB was a schnell boat. This was a leichtes schnell-boot. They were all built to the same specifications. Later on there was probably a variation, but I do not see why they would have to.

I can describe the boat to you. Tomorrow I would like, with permission of the panel, to bring in photographs of that same type of boat. It was actually the boat of *Komet* but exactly the same. The boat of *Komet* was designated LS2 and the boat of *Kormoran* was designated LS3. I would also like to bring in photographs of the equipment that Lee has been telling you about. I think Senator Margetts may have even seen some photocopies.

ACTING CHAIR—Let us leave some of that for tomorrow. We only have a few more minutes this afternoon.

Senator MARGETTS—On the day we had a hearing in Canberra, someone—I cannot remember who it was—refuted there was any possibility that a motorised torpedo boat could have been—

Mr Doohan—I think it was Admiral Oxenbould. I have a copy here.

Senator MARGETTS—If that is important, we probably need a succinct rationale of why Admiral Oxenbould's confident assertion was not true.

Mr Doohan—I will explain now what I am doing because this is such a complicated story. I imagine that several times I am going to confuse myself, as well as you. What I am trying to do is to get out some sort of a background so that you will have some idea of where you should start your questioning of me. I am really trying to make it easy for you.

ACTING CHAIR—In the remaining 10 minutes I would like to get Mr Doohan's version of what happened in the action. Are you are saying that the *Kormoran* was dead in the water?

Mr Doohan—Yes, she was.

ACTING CHAIR—You need to explain how they got torpedoes away. You are

suggesting they were virtually dead in the water and they were able with some accuracy to hit *Sydney*.

Mr Doohan—You are believing what the Germans said. This is going to take more than 10 minutes.

ACTING CHAIR—Just give us a potted version in 10 minutes of—

Mr Doohan—It is impossible. It is 57 years and you want me to give it in 10 minutes.

ACTING CHAIR—No—of what actually happened when the ships came in. What is Mr Doohan's version of what happened from the time it was sighted till the time they came together and the action took place? Could you do that in 10 minutes?

Mr Doohan—I will try. In the first instance, *Kormoran* had the highest foremast of all the raiders. She had a lookout that went right to the top of the mast. It was sent up hydraulically. This will take more than 10 minutes; I am sorry but I cannot do 57 years worth in 10 minutes. The official story is that *Sydney* sighted *Kormoran* and *Kormoran* sighted *Sydney* at four o'clock. The Germans use G time and we use Hotel time. They were both on the same bearing. They were heading for each other so they were both on the same time. *Sydney* was always on H time. It does not matter what time it was, it was five o'clock our time. At that time she sighted *Kormoran*.

It was Lieutenant Bunjes who gave four stories—they all gave four different stories. He was one of our major persons who we said was worthwhile listening to because he was telling the truth, but he told four different stories. His first story was this one which we had better stick with for the 10 minutes. They were heading north and *Sydney* was heading more or less south. Detmers was sitting and having coffee at four o'clock their time, when a messenger came running in to tell him that a ship had been sighted from the masthead. So Detmers trundled off to the bridge and looked at his ranging telescope. Bunjes states that it was about 25 miles away. With Zeiss binoculars, they had about a 30-mile lookout from the highest nest among the raiders.

Their story is they saw *Sydney* then and *Sydney* at that time saw them. Incidentally there are many reports that *Sydney* was seen on the port side or dead ahead on the starboard. You can take your pick. Within five minutes Detmers had recognised this as a first-class cruiser. I was at sea a few years and at 25 miles or even 20 or 16 miles, anything you can see—

ACTING CHAIR—You are pretty good.

Mr Doohan—Yes, you are pretty good. You might even see the mast. Then we had a chase. Within about an hour, the *Kormoran* was heading west. He suddenly changed

direction, headed west and was doing 14 knots.

ACTING CHAIR—And he was going up sun.

Mr Doohan—He was going north. Then he changed into the sun. *Kormoran* turned into the sun. *Sydney* immediately changed course and started heading for him. The German story always is that *Sydney* was doing 20 knots. There are ways of telling. You can tell by bow wave and all sorts of things. He was doing all of this from 25 miles or 20 miles at the least. But it still took *Sydney* 1½ hours from that time till Burnett decided to commit suicide and came up on his starboard side. I am writing a narrative on this, as you might guess, and I have all this detail from Detmers' records as to what he did in that period of time and none of it gels. It is absolutely impossible. It is impossible to tell you in 10 minutes.

Mr DONDAS—Were the records out of the diary that was taken from him?

Mr Doohan—The Kriegstagebuch. That incidentally is so suspect that it is wonderful. You have his Kriegstagebuch and his 1959 book *The Raider Kormoran*. Both cut each other's throats anyway. This is the sort of thing where you can take your pick.

Mr DONDAS—Did he make it up as he went along?

Mr Doohan—Yes, he did. He was not drunk, but he made it up as he went along.

ACTING CHAIR—This is vital evidence and we will want more in writing from you in due course. That is what I understand you want to do anyhow.

Mr Doohan—One thing more. I heard what you said about evidence under oath. You have read Barbara Winter and she makes direct allegations that I have been influencing witnesses. One of them in particular was Reg Lander from the HFDF. She has made a lot of other accusations too which I am very concerned about and I would like you to swear me in tomorrow morning.

ACTING CHAIR—We will make sure we get that on the record. Ladies and gentlemen, thank you very much. It has been a long day.

Resolved (on motion by **Mr Dondas**):

That this committee authorises publication of the evidence given before it at public hearing this day.

Subcommittee adjourned at 5.44 p.m.