



**COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA**

# **JOINT STANDING COMMITTEE**

**ON**

**FOREIGN AFFAIRS, DEFENCE AND TRADE**

**(Defence Subcommittee)**

**Reference: HMAS *Sydney* inquiry**

**PERTH**

**Friday, 17 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

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JOINT STANDING COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN AFFAIRS, DEFENCE AND TRADE  
(Defence Subcommittee)

*HMAS Sydney inquiry*

PERTH

Friday, 17 April 1998

Present

Mr Taylor (Acting Chair)

Senator Sandy Macdonald

Mr Dondas

Senator Margetts

Subcommittee met at 8.30 a.m.

Mr Taylor took the chair.

**JONES, Mr Hayden Garfield, Member, Gascoyne Historical Society, PO Box 1057, Carnarvon, Western Australia 6701**

**MILLER, Mrs Cecily Agnes, Honorary Secretary, Gascoyne Historical Society Inc., PO Box 1057, Carnarvon, Western Australia 6701**

**ACTING CHAIR**—I declare open this subcommittee inquiring into the circumstances of the sinking of HMAS *Sydney*. I thank you for your indulgence in coming a little earlier this morning. We have received your submission. There was one submission, wasn't there?

**Mrs Miller**—We have more.

**ACTING CHAIR**—Would somebody move that we accept the additional submission from the Gascoyne Historical Society dated 16-17 April?

Resolved (on motion by Senator Margetts):

That the subcommittee accept the additional submission from the Gascoyne Historical Society dated 16 and 17 April.

**ACTING CHAIR**—Are there any additions, deletions or amendments to either these papers or the earlier submission?

**Mrs Miller**—Yes, there are. There is one on the secret radio in Carnarvon and additional information on the boats. The second lot is the finding of film and photographs.

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

**Mr Jones**—Yes. We will try to keep this brief because of the time constraints you mentioned last night. The Gascoyne Historical Society welcomed the announcement that there was to be an inquiry into the loss of HMAS *Sydney*. Our only regret is that it is taking place 56 years later. The saga of the *Sydney* is very much part of our regional history. The Gascoyne region is probably the closest geographically to the event. Two of the *Kormoran* lifeboats came ashore a few miles to the north of Carnarvon and we believe our region is the only one to have erected two memorial cairns: one to those lost on the *Sydney* and the other to those of the *Kormoran*. In addition, the Carnarvon War Memorial has inscribed on it the names of the 645 members of the crew of HMAS *Sydney*.

In this statement we do not intend making a summary of our submission but merely to highlight a few aspects that might otherwise receive scant attention. It is our belief that a more exhaustive archival search still needs to be undertaken. While a

considerable amount of archival research has been done in Australia over the years, and perhaps some more promoted by this inquiry, we are sure that a thorough search of our overseas allied and former enemy archives needs to be done. In our submission we indicated that highly experienced researchers who are fluent translators and decoders would need to be employed by the Australian government. This will involve considerable expenditure.

We also gave some examples of where additional materials might be found, including obviously German, Japanese, perhaps less obviously Polish, British and United States archives. Since our original submission, developments have occurred which suggest we should also add Russian and Dutch archives as well. About a month ago the German Chancellor and the French President visited Russia. Besides checking on the health of the Russian President, one of the German Chancellor's stated aims included, ironically, the return to Germany of art treasures and archival materials taken by Russia at the end of the war.

We would like to add the archives of the Dutch Government-in-Exile in London. We have submitted today photographs and a letter indicating that the government of the Dutch East Indies did have at least three Indonesian Intelligence warrant officers operating from the Carnarvon Port Hotel perhaps as early as mid-1941. As locals, we cannot make comments on the highly technical and experienced evidence that was submitted yesterday on the actual sites where HMAS *Sydney* and KSN *Kormoran* sank. It is, however, our belief that the *Sydney* will be found in waters much closer to the coast than hitherto believed. Our opinion is based partly on the published writings of the *Kormoran's* flying officer and watch officer, Heinrich Ahl—who now, by the way, is Professor Ahl—as well as his postwar correspondence with the Snook family of Carnarvon.

Professor Ahl has visited Australia since the war and has in fact published an article in the *Naval Historical Review*. The basis of this article is part of the evidence, we believe, that the *Sydney* probably went down closer to the shore. If I can quote a paragraph from the *Naval Historical Review* of December 1979, he wrote:

. . . when, *after being taken prisoner*, we remembered a bright flash . . . most probably it came from the exploding *Sydney*.

He has already indicated that they saw the ship ablaze disappearing eastwards over the horizon. After he has been captured and has found out that the *Sydney* has in fact been sunk, he suddenly remembers this large explosion, this bright flash. Surely that would be something he would remember right on the spot, not as an afterthought. I think that is also what was meant to go into this short summary.

We have also collected oral data from eyewitnesses who claim to have seen the ship ablaze at that time. We give just the one example here. We refer to the testimony of Roy Clatworthy of the 11/44th Battalion who was on the Mesa Hills near Northampton on



Red Alert at the time and saw the glare at sea. The oral data there is in our original submission. Yesterday we heard further oral data and similar testimony of eyewitnesses at Port Gregory.

In fact, we believe this to be one fruitful line of inquiry that should be pursued with some urgency, especially on this subject which is already reliant on conjecture. The urgency of the collection of oral testimony is best illustrated by remembering that someone who was 16 years old in 1941 would today be 73 years old. So it is fairly important that we should collect as extensively and intensively as we can whatever remaining oral data there is. We are of course aware of the limitations of oral data, but it is becoming a much more legitimate tool of historical investigation. I have spent the last 17 years in central Africa reconstructing state formations in preliterate and precolonial societies where nearly all the evidence is in fact oral. But this testimony can be tested against various other indicators.

We do have several more points that we would like to make, but we will respond to those when questioned. We are aware of the time limitations here. Some of these relate to the Carnarvon Heritage Group Inc. which includes the maritime precinct area, the Christmas Island exhumation and the most appropriate commemoration of the tragic loss of life on both sides during this conflict.

**ACTING CHAIR**—Thank you very much indeed for that. Let us start by inviting some comment on the last two points you made: the appropriate commemoration and also the potential for Christmas Island exhumation. Would you like to make some comments on both of those and we will get those on the record first up?

**Mrs Miller**—The commemoration, we hope, will be housed in the new museum that is going to be built in the Carnarvon maritime precinct area, and we have videos and files and things like that which will be in there. We would like to have the final photograph or video when you find the *Sydney* housed in there as well; and there is ongoing oral data to be collected as well. We need some help, of course, with all of this too.

**Mr Jones**—We do believe that when either or both of these ships are found they will naturally be declared national war graves in the same way that Pearl Harbour has been created as a national war grave. I was very impressed when I saw Pearl Harbour. This would need to be demarcated and declared a national war grave. As Cecily has just mentioned, we do have memorial cairns already there at Carnarvon, but we do intend establishing a museum as well. We have the go-ahead now—the Carnarvon community is doing that—and it seems to make a great deal of sense that it would make a very suitable repository for all the materials, for example, that are collected as a result of this inquiry. Not only the written materials but artefacts and things like that should be located in one central area. In addition to that, we are exploring the possibility of getting photographs and a brief biography of each of the 645 men who died on the *Sydney*. They would be

displayed on plaques in this repository.

**ACTING CHAIR**—What about the exhumation?

**Mr Jones**—One of our members—our president, in fact, who is now not in the best of health—did visit Christmas Island in 1987 and was taken to the site of the burial by the Administrator. He did bring back the files of correspondence which were unclassified, photocopied by the Administrator. In fact, we even have a photograph of Mr Hazelby sitting on what is reputed to be the grave of the unknown sailor. But there seems to be some doubt now whether that is in fact the grave of the unknown sailor. So it needs now to be further investigated. I myself think that the body should be exhumed and identified if possible. We ourselves mention dental records.

But a very simple test can be done already, and this is open to forensic experts of the homicide squad right now. It is a simple process of exclusion. For example, after the remains have been exhumed, if forensic experts determine that this was a 90-year-old female of Melanesian origin, that would indicate to us that there is no point in going any further in the identification process. All this can be done now, cheaply and with the tools that we have. The DNA testing—the deoxyribose nucleic acid—is a problem because then you have to take samples of any living relatives of each of the men on the *Sydney*. It would be a very exhaustive process to do that.

**ACTING CHAIR**—Mr Jones, are you an archaeologist? What is your background? Do you have a scientific background?

**Mr Jones**—No, my background is African history, as I mentioned.

**ACTING CHAIR**—You have some experience with DNA testing in terms of historical origins, have you?

**Mr Jones**—Yes. It is not being used very often. The example that was used yesterday was a fairly easy one—that is, the members of the Romanov family who were executed at Ekaterinburg. There they simply took some hair of the nephew of Archduke Michael, I think it was, and were then able to identify all the members of the Russian royal family. It was quite simple because they knew who they were looking for, but in the case of the *Sydney* you have 645 individuals.

**Senator MARGETTS**—Someone suggested that it was noted in the records in relation to the Christmas Island body that the person was in a boiler suit. That would surely narrow it down, because I gather there were not many people who were in that position on HMAS *Sydney*.

**Mr Jones**—Yes. A few observations were made when the carley float was found. Firstly, it was a boiler suit, so it could have been an engine-room person. The clothing

that he was wearing was bleached, so it could have come from any ship that had been sunk. There were other indications such as footwear and that sort of thing. So, yes, it would narrow it down.

**Senator MARGETTS**—Do you have any doubts as to the authenticity of German accounts after the *Sydney-Kormoran* encounter, and what would be the basis of your doubts if you have them?

**Mr Jones**—One has to be very objective when looking at this material. The German accounts are the only ones that are available as eyewitness accounts of the battle. I think we have to believe that Captain Detmers did have the lives of the other members of his crew to worry about, so the position that he gave when the hostilities began would be fairly close to where it actually took place. But there are other things that need to be factored in, and one of these is the date. It is the end of 1941. All of Europe, with the single exception of Britain, has been occupied. Operation Barbarossa is under way in Russia. The German people—indeed, Captain Detmers himself—would be aware that Stalingrad had been occupied by German troops. Captain Detmers would have been very much aware that at that time it appeared that Germany was going to win the war. Italy, under Mussolini, also entered the war just when France was falling, not when the war broke out. Mussolini waited. Detmers would have been aware that Germany might in fact win the war, so he would have to take that into consideration in any evidence he gave.

As to his escape from the prison in Victoria in January 1945, I am not quite sure what the purpose of that was, unless it was simply to make a footnote for the historical record—that as an officer he did attempt to escape and to re-enter the war, presumably, with the prospect in front of him of official histories being made.

**Mrs Miller**—We have one person who is sending additional information over from South Australia. He was there when the two prisoners escaped, so he is going to give an account of that. I will send it over to you, or fax it, next week.

**Senator MARGETTS**—An important part of the intrigue is trying to reconstruct why actions occurred the way they did. In the *Naval Historical Review* article which you included with your submission, Professor Ahl states that the *Sydney* approached quickly. Why would the ship have done this if Burnett had believed it was an enemy vessel?

**Mr Jones**—I think that detail has already been covered by other experts. We have read all the material, but we did not concentrate on the actual action itself. I could go on and repeat what other people have said.

**Senator MARGETTS**—With all of your reading, I am still interested to know if you have an opinion as to why Captain Burnett came so close to the *Kormoran*.

**Mr Jones**—I do have an opinion, but it is a personal opinion, as all of this has to

be. I believe he did want to capture the *Kormoran*. I believe he was misled. I believe he might, as indeed was said yesterday, have read the navy memo that said that these vessels should be captured and also the memo that said that we were wasting too much ammunition and that it must be conserved. So he may not in fact have put the usual three warning shots across the bow of the *Kormoran*.

**Mrs Miller**—There is a view in Carnarvon that the captain did not go close to the *Kormoran* at all, that she was fired on and she chased the Japanese that were on the starboard side. They torpedoed her and then they finished her off, but that is just an opinion now in Carnarvon.

**Mr Jones**—But I do not subscribe to the Japanese version. This is the reason why we are acting right now to make sure we get all the data. Indeed, the Japanese archives must be researched very well, very thoroughly.

**Senator MARGETTS**—You mentioned Jonathon Rowbotham's unpublished book. Do you have any idea or theory where that might be?

**Mrs Miller**—We did hear that it had been burnt in a fire in a car that he had, but this is only oral history; we do not know exactly what happened to it.

**Mr Jones**—Rowbotham was a very eccentric person, extremely eccentric. I do not know how much credence you can really give to whatever he said.

**Senator MARGETTS**—We are getting signals from the audience that someone might know where it is.

**Mrs Glenys McDonald**—I think there is a copy of Jonathon Rowbotham's manuscript in the Battye Library. There is one chapter and a little bit missing, but it is there; I have sat down and read it.

**Senator MARGETTS**—Thank you. We are going to have an open forum soon anyway.

**Mrs Glenys McDonald**—Sorry.

**Senator MARGETTS**—No, that is good. It is good to get that on the record. Thank you for that.

**Senator SANDY MACDONALD**—You say in your submission that the grave on Christmas Island has been located beyond reasonable doubt, but when you gave your opening address you said you were not so sure. What do you feel now?

**Mr Jones**—When I say it was located beyond reasonable doubt, the submission

was made two weeks after the deadline. Mr Hazelby had in fact been led there personally by the Administrator and shown the grave. It was an old cemetery, by the way, not the one that is currently being used. But I think it was the members of the committee who mentioned yesterday that there is now some doubt as to whether this was in fact the grave. It is unmarked, by the way.

**Senator SANDY MACDONALD**—Do you believe Mr Hazelby's site should be exhumed?

**Mr Jones**—He believes it should be. I do too.

**Senator SANDY MACDONALD**—What do you believe should happen to the body if it were found to be a *Sydney* survivor?

**Mr Jones**—As for this person, usually when memorials are made to unknown soldiers, unknown sailors and so on, a body is interred and it is unknown. This is what should happen. If it is impossible to identify that particular person exactly, I think a memorial to the unknown sailor should be erected somewhere nearby—preferably in Western Australia and preferably in Carnarvon.

**Senator SANDY MACDONALD**—What veracity do you place on the suggestion that there was a Leica film buried at Red Bluff?

**Mr Jones**—We have submitted that in evidence. Rowbotham of course and others have reproduced some of that in their writings. It is claimed that it was done on toilet paper. But fairly recently Dennis Harry, one of our local amateur historians, actually found the negative of a film in the rubbish tip at Carnarvon of all of those pictograms that appear on the negative. He has actually taken me to the spots and has indicated the points that he can identify using those pictograms.

As to their authenticity and why they should be on the rubbish tip, this is what happens if you leave inquiries too long: the original people who hold the materials die off and they pass to their successors, who might have no idea or no interest at all in keeping these records. We do have them. There is just one caveat to that: the current owner of those photos of the negatives wants to retain them, but they are in the submission.

**Mrs Miller**—They are in there for you to look at, but they are not for publication. You will find a copy of this in there.

**Mr DONDAS**—With all the evidence, all the concern and all the unusual information that has been available for the last 50 years, why do you think it has taken so long for there to be a parliamentary inquiry?

**Mr Jones**—Over time there has been pressure exerted from various quarters to have the inquiry. I think in the early days people felt threatened about an inquiry. If you recall, there was the secrecy act. When you visit people in the region and try to get oral testimony, even today it is difficult to do that.

If I could just give you here an anecdote, a true story: one person said that he did have a secret document that he had kept and was reluctant to reveal. He said, however, he would show me, and could we arrange a time. It was 10 o'clock at night and I said, 'Why don't we go now?' So we went to his house and he did retrieve this document from the bottom of a drawer where it was well hidden. It simply turned out to be the second draft—it had 'office copy' written across the top of it—of Professor Ahl's publication. So I gave him the final version.

But the point is that there is still this fear, if you like, among people about bringing forward materials, which dates right back to the Second World War. Then from 1947 onwards you have the outbreak of the Cold War, and then you also have the passage of the Crimes Act. The Cold War lasted from 1947 right up to, say, the collapse of Russia in 1989. Again, with the McCarthy type thing in America and so on, there was still this reluctance, I think, to come forward with this type of evidence. That could be one reason.

Another reason, of course, is official: that ministers and government officials did not think it was necessary to have the inquiry. A further reason might very well be that they did not believe there was any further information. But, of course, since that time the British cabinet papers have become public with Churchill's comments on Australia at that time—that is, the possibility of carrying out a military coup in Australia now is public, as was mentioned or brought up in the British cabinet during the war. So, for all those reasons, I think things have been postponed.

**Mr DONDAS**—If they knew where the *Kormoran* was—and all indications are that the longitudinal and latitudinal position is correct—why have we not found that?

**Mr Jones**—Up until very recently I do not think we had the technology to do it. Aerial surveys—and, by the way, if you do fly over that area in Carnarvon, you will see all the way down the surveyors lines; from the air they look like roads—have been carried out whilst exploring for minerals, and I have been told by one person doing such surveys that there are at least 200 unidentified wrecks on our Continental Shelf. Where and how do you start narrowing it down? People were indicating very well yesterday how this could be done.

**ACTING CHAIR**—I suppose I am calling for a subjective comment from you with this question: do you believe that the *Kormoran* opened fire whilst flying the German flag? Do you have a view on the modus operandi of the action?

**Mr Jones**—No, to be quite honest, as a historian there would be no way I could

do that. The testimony has been given not only by the captain and the flight officer but even by ordinary sailors, some of whom are here in Australia; they did come back. Someone raised that question yesterday. One is married and in Queensland; some are policemen. They have said that there was no white flag raised. But, again, our Australian citizen—Mr Faulk I think his name is—in Queensland was in the engine room, so he would not know anyhow.

**Mrs Miller**—I would add one thing. There are four, five or six copies of a map in there that can be handed around. Down at Miaboolya Beach, there is an odd structure of cement which is about two metres deep up on top of a hill. I have been to DOLA, and there is nothing there to say what it is. There is a very deep hollow there which is hidden from everybody, down the bottom of which a German knife and Luger bullets were found, and also there was a deteriorated mast type of thing.

But yesterday you were talking of additional radios or something being around. It is possible that that may have been used for that. The knife and the bullets are up in Carnarvon and they can be sighted. I think we did send photographs to you and over to the eastern states as well.

**ACTING CHAIR**—So that is this unidentified concrete shaft.

**Mrs Miller**—It is that little mark there, yes, it is a little concrete shaft. Down in the hollow are the knife and the Luger bullets, and somebody else has come up in the last couple of months and looked at the bullets and said that they are definitely German.

**ACTING CHAIR**—Thank you for that. Have you any final comments before you leave us?

**Mr Jones**—No, I think that is all.

**ACTING CHAIR**—Thank you very much indeed. You have been a great help.

[9.09 a.m.]

**DOOHAN, Mr John William, Secretary, End Secrecy on Sydney Group, 21 Bartlett Street, Willagee, Western Australia**

**ACTING CHAIR**—Mr Doohan, I thank you for your indulgence with our continuing on this morning with your evidence. We have about 50 minutes in which to finish your segment which, when you compare it with everybody else's time yesterday, I think is pretty generous. I hope you will take it in that spirit.

**Mr Doohan**—I have no complaints for the committee.

**ACTING CHAIR**—Thank you. Let us go back to the Doohan scenario in terms of what happened with the action. Can you take us through that as to your views, and the basis on which you have those views, of the action as it took place?

**Mr Doohan**—The views are coming from all descriptions of the action. They are very descriptive. They are contradictory descriptions. But, for the purpose of this, we only have the German history, so I will quote Captain Detmers generally.

Yesterday we got as far as where the chase had begun. *Kormoran* was heading westward. *Sydney* was heading in a southerly direction and changed her course to diverge with *Kormoran*. During this chase, to cut it down to its fine details, there are contradictory reports from Detmers, from his officers that they maintained total silence to all the *Sydney* signals—'Who are you?' and everything; they maintained total silence. This was maintained right through until the action, and of course there were no signals then from the *Kormoran*.

On the other hand, we have Detmers and others giving us a detailed description of how the *Sydney*, first of all, was on the horizon and then she flashed 'NNJ'—which was a signal—to them, and they, the Germans, took it differently. Signals kept on being passed from the *Sydney* in this chase. The chase lasted, if you recall, an hour and a half.

I would like to take you back to my submission and two letters that we call 'Letters from the grave': one from Keith Homard, an aircraftman aboard the *Sydney* who went down with her, and Able Leading Seaman Walter Freer—Wally Freer. Have you seen that submission?

**ACTING CHAIR**—Yes.

**Mr Doohan**—Those two people made it totally certain—and I would take their word before I would take it of any member of the NSDAP—that Burnett was an extremely efficient captain. He at all times kept them on their toes. Every evening there was an evening watch, a gun watch or a complete stand-to. There was a stand-to in the



morning at dawn—which is standard anyway. They had that in case they were being trailed during the night. We also know from Freer that the gun crews were standing by and that two of our Allied ships very nearly got sunk by the *Sydney* because they were a little bit late in answering. In other words, they were two or three minutes late in answering that recognition signal.

We have Detmers and co. all for an hour and a half—supposedly a neutral ship—running away from the coastline and any possible aerial support that they might get because they have suddenly recognised a cruiser; they sent out a QQQ which was that they had sighted a raider. The captain and some of his officers had already recognised that this was a ship of what they called the ‘Perth class’—and obviously it was not a raider.

But I am putting this forward because obviously aboard the *Sydney*—disregard all the facts that HF/DFing was going on—Burnett knew that the ship that he was after, what it was, the fact that this ship was running away from him, refusing all answering, depending on which story you take, heading west for an hour and a half, and Captain Burnett is very quietly just playing his ukulele and following them for an hour and a half. That is just impossible; it cannot happen. So, with that background, the chase goes on.

At 5 o’clock, and we will call it 6 o’clock our time—whether you take G time or H time—Detmers then says that he sent a QQQ. He sent this QQQ twice. A QQQ means enemy raider sighted or raider sighted; in other words, he wants help. At that stage of the game the chase had been going for an hour—but that is the time.

Now you place yourself in his position—and you have a maritime background. You are sailing along. You are in a neutral ship or a Dutch ship under charter to the Australian government or British government. You suddenly sight what you think is a raider. You would know that you would not suddenly turn around and head westward—and that is at the time you sight the raider. You do not wait until you have been chased for an hour before you suddenly think, ‘Oh, my God, I’d better send out a QQQ signal.’ You just do not do that. As soon as you sight the raider, you send a signal off to the nearest help you can get. Whether it gets there or not is a matter of conjecture, but you send it.

Detmers also said that that signal was picked up by Perth radio, and Perth radio answered and asked him to reply. He had sent two signals; they apparently got the second one. Geraldton and the tug *Uco* got the first two in garbled form, although there was still enough to put something together. But what Detmers says is that Perth radio—it would be Applecross—picked up his signal, answered his signal, and they should have immediately alerted ashore, ‘There’s a raider out there; we just got a QQQ.’ But they did not do that.

Another very important point is that Detmers would never have put that story forward. When he was captured, he wanted to tell stories that were believed. He did not know of any cover-up that might come out of this; he wanted to be believed. So he was

not going to say to us, who answered his signal, that we answered his signal if we did not. Detmers is telling the truth there; it might have been the only time in his life he told the truth. The sighting occurred at 6 o'clock our time, not 5 o'clock, and that hour makes a lot of difference.

Then we have the situation where the *Sydney* is getting much closer, and at about 5.25 the *Sydney* then signalled, 'Show your secret sign.' The secret sign was the two outside letters of a four-letter code. Detmers said that he could not do that. There is also evidence to show that he probably did know that sign anyway, because they had already captured the merchant navy code not long before. They had those codes; we believe they did anyway. At that stage of the game Detmers decided that there was nothing he could do. The thing that he would normally have done was to do what people said yesterday, which was to have surrendered earlier than that for relying on trickery. I am saying that he was relying on the fact that he also had assistance with him.

He immediately decided to fight, according to his story. Remember, the *Sydney* is supposedly coming along on his starboard side, has caught up and has obviously dropped speed. He is doing 14 knots. He says in some of the reports that the *Sydney* slackened speed. He even says the *Sydney* stopped, and there is also plenty of evidence to show that *Kormoran* probably stopped too. This is where you have to take some of these stories from the Germans. Detmers then decided to drop his screens. His gun crews are standing by. To go into action with the *Kormoran* she had to drop all her deck railings, the hydraulics then take the 5.9s up to firing position. At that stage of the game they were behind the edge of the square hatch. All this had to be done. Detmers said that he did that in six seconds, which is an impossibility. Some of his own crew said that; the times they gave were totally different from his. So the story now is that we have the *Sydney* travelling along on the starboard side and, according to Detmers, she had dropped astern and had stopped her engines.

**ACTING CHAIR**—What is the distance at this stage?

**Mr Doohan**—At this stage the distance is anywhere between six miles and 900 yards, according to the German story. I will have to explain that. Four of the people whom the *Aquitania* picked up said that the distance was between four and six miles—one said six miles, one said five miles, one said about four miles. Even Detmers himself, when first interrogated, said a mile and a half. The next time he said a mile; then he dropped it to a quarter of a mile. We then had another witness who suddenly dropped it to 900 yards. Soon, someone will step forward and say that they put their gangway up and went aboard. This is how ridiculous it is.

The German story then—and there are several stories of this too—is that, as Detmers said, their first-ranging shot was short, the second-ranging shot was over and that the third shot found the mark. At this time the *Sydney* was sitting there with the master gunner's hand on the switch. They had got a bead and, if he was talking about 1,200

yards, all *Sydney* had was her guns slightly deflected downwards to the waterline, which was standard.

*Sydney* is sitting here while this shot falls short, it goes plunk in here and then it passes over—you can hear them go over, these fellows—so he sits there; maybe he is having morning coffee, I do not know. Then the third one hits him amidships and helps destroy the whole complement on the bridge. There we have to go to another gun. On the port and starboard side of *Kormoran* there was a 3.7 on the starboard side—anti-tank guns—and they had a maximum rate of firing, even modified. If they wanted to, they could do 20 a minute, but it does not matter what they were doing a minute. The port gun, of course, was not in the action at all because it could not see; it never saw the enemy in truth. But two men were on the starboard gun, on the 3.7. One was Jacob Fend and the other one was Hans Koblitz. There was a third man, but Winter has quite enthusiastically got Jacob Fend and Hans Koblitz raking that bridge and splattering everybody all round the bridge. She's quite enthusiastic about that. This is what actually turned the tables—this quick attack to get rid of the command on the bridge.

Going ahead, when these people finished up in the prisoner of war camp in Victoria, Detmers came down from the officers camp at Dhurringile to see his crew in Murchison. While he was there, he called out, 'Who was the man on the 3.7 gun?' Jacob Fend stepped forward smartly and promptly got an Iron Cross first class slapped on him. Koblitz did not get anything, but he was the loader on that gun. But they were both on the port gun. I have got Fend's interrogation notes and I have got Koblitz's interrogation notes from 1941 and they both say Jacob Fend, the man who got the medal, was most emphatic in stating, 'I was on the port gun. I never fired a shot. I did not see the cruiser until after we abandoned the ship.' This is the cruiser whose bridge command he has just polished off. I mention that because this is what happened in this first section of gunnery.

According to Detmers, and even Skeries, his gunnery officer, there was a short shot—an overshoot—and that 'Our third shot after that was just target practice'. Then their salvos started hitting the bridge section and just around turrets A and B. But then, all of a sudden, when we have been into the action about a minute, one of two torpedoes, supposedly fired from *Kormoran* from above-water tubes, hit *Sydney*—some say about 20 feet from the bow, others about 60 feet—and put A and B turrets out of action.

Are you familiar with the Leander type? You know there is a teak deck all the way through these ships and it was at the waist section where you had your catapult and your catapult mount for the Walrus. There is a lot of fuel there in that Walrus and the official story, Detmers' story, is that the shelling and the 3.7 work that was going on through there was keeping everybody away from the torpedo tubes which are in that section—or very nearly, just a bit aft of the Walrus. So remember the teak deck and everything? It started a massive fire, a conflagration. There was a roaring conflagration and that of course would have immediately been sucked into the air intakes, down below and down to the engine room, everywhere.

But in this roaring conflagration—while we are in this part of the ship in this part of the action—you know that the history of it is that the *Walrus* was sitting up there with its propeller turning? She was ready to take off. One man said you could see the pilot. Well, he should have seen two other men there, because they held three men. But the point of it is the 1200 yards, and the wind that was coming across from the *Kormoran*. That plane would have taken off into the wind when she was shot off with the catapult. To shoot a plane off, a man would have to be crazy, the pilot would have to be crazy. To be shot off at a ship 1200 yards away—they have been chasing it for an hour and a half; they know it's a raider anyway—that plane would have immediately been shot over the ship with anti-aircraft guns. You would never do it. You would not do it for safety anyway at 1200 yards!

So this story is totally out of order. Everything about it is out of order. You know we have a situation—this has been going on for about five minutes, but the action, you remember, is supposed to have lasted for an hour, and in the captain's own words it was an hour.

We had only been going a couple of minutes for all of this to happen and then X and Y turrets begin to open up. Both fire. Y turret—I am not sure if it was X or Y—fired a couple of shots and maybe a couple of two-gun salvos. Then she went silent. Then X turret—I am not sure I have got the two turrets right here—continued to fire, then put a shot through the funnel of the *Kormoran*, a shot that went through her bridge radio room, the radio section amidships up near the bridge—this is their story—and also one hit near the engine room and started a fire. The way they put it in some of the accounts, you could have toasted bread on it, but it was just a fire.

At this stage of the game *Sydney* had been hit by a torpedo. She was down six feet by the bows, her screws were out of the water at times, and she was also half a mile away. *Kormoran* was moving, still at 14 knots according to the Germans and according to Detmers and the record, so *Sydney*, which was stopped—and there is some argument about that; sometimes Detmers says she was not stopped and other times he says she was stopped, but whether she was stopped or not—was not going to be doing 14 knots to keep up the same speed because, with a gaping hole, the force of water is going to take every bulkhead door you have got right through to the glands. Luckily I know a little bit about the build of a ship, so I have a bit of an idea myself.

*Sydney* could not have been making any speed at all, but this is the stage of the game where *Sydney*, from half a mile away, suddenly changes course to a 90 degree angle and shoots in to ram the *Kormoran*. You could not do that anyway because you are falling behind and you would be miles behind the *Kormoran* by the time you were trying to ram. Obviously, it is ridiculous. She could not have been trying to do this in the state that she was in. She was on fire and by this time she was a roaring mass of flames. When she got onto the port side of *Kormoran*—she never was on the port side, as we will show in a moment—*Kormoran* opened up with her guns that would bear on the port side, because

you can only fire four guns on one side at a time, as you know. She opened up on *Sydney* again and went on with the target practice.

*Sydney* by this time is a mess. All her guns are pointing away from *Kormoran*—that is, her main armaments—and there is no-one to fire them. They are out of action, there is no power to the guns and she is on fire—massively on fire—and particularly on fire in the centre waist section where the Walrus went up. That is where the two sets of four torpedo tubes are: port and starboard. At this stage of the game the *Sydney* torpedo tube crew, from this roaring mass of fire, on the starboard side—the port side of *Kormoran*—suddenly fire off four torpedoes. They must have all been in asbestos suits, because the whole area in the waist is a mass of flames—this is according to the German account as well. You know the type of ship it was. All those decks were causing all the flames—the decks and the fuel and whatever else was around. This is cutting it down as plainly as I can.

At this stage of the game *Kormoran's* engines give out and she loses way, but some of these torpedoes—he manages to get enough way on to dodge these four torpedoes—pass ahead and some pass astern. Those torpedoes are mythical, anyway. Then he suddenly runs out of steam. He has got no engines and he comes to a halt. I will just go back to the beginning of the action. I mentioned yesterday about—

**ACTING CHAIR**—Where are the ensigns at this stage?

**Mr Doohan**—According to the Germans, immediately they decamouflaged—in the six seconds of decamouflaging—the German battle flag was up at the masthead. One man was designated at all times in an action to whip this battle flag up, so they say. So, according to Detmers, that was flying within six seconds. All his guns were ready for firing in six seconds. You could imagine you would like to see that done yourself, I think. Everything was done in six seconds. So that is where the ensigns were. Yesterday I mentioned to you the deck and engine-room log of Detmers, which was taken from him after he escaped from Dhurringile. Do you recall?

**ACTING CHAIR**—Yes.

**Mr Doohan**—I have not got it here, but I can get it for you. I presume you are going to ask for these things on notice. That deck and engine-room log was in the *Kormoran's* codes and ciphers. It was a special cipher. I said they sent it back to England after the war, but they didn't. They did it here, when they captured him, before the war finished. One was the deck log and one was the engine-room log of when the action started. He tries to work his deck log in with his engine-room log, but his engine-room log says—

**ACTING CHAIR**—Were these actual logs or reconstructed logs by Detmers?

**Mr Doohan**—These were reconstructed by Detmers afterwards.

**ACTING CHAIR**—These were produced while he was in prison.

**Mr Doohan**—They were never produced; they were captured while he was in prison, in the last few months that he was in prison. Remember that he was there from then until 1947 before he was sent home.

**ACTING CHAIR**—The point I am making is that he wrote them while he was incarcerated.

**Mr Doohan**—Yes, he did. But he wrote them at a time when he could remember everything clearly. He wrote them at a time when he was supposed to be an efficient captain. Remember this deck and engine-room log is accepted by us, even though the public has not seen it. It is officially accepted and it has been recommended, even in Summerrell's Guide No. 3. It is Detmers's. How could it be wrong? It is one of the Nazis. It is not one of us. We are the ones they don't want to hear. Detmers was accepted.

This log says that at 5.30 p.m. he decamouflaged. He gives it only a minute. He does not give an exact time, but he has written before the next timing, which is 5.35 p.m., 'Sydney has fired her shots, Sydney has fired four salvos, and Sydney has hit him in the engine room'. And his four diesel electrics were out of action. The whole engine room was one mess. Chief engineer Stehr is dead, second engineer Lieutenant von Gaza is dead, and at least one other person was dead. I think there were about 80 dead actually. Immediately the order was given, in an adjoining compartment, the question was asked: 'Can we abandon the engine room?' They were not in that section, but they were next door to it. 'Yes, abandon the engine room.'

Within minutes, we have on the log, they were beginning to abandon ship. This abandoning ship record by Detmers—and at this time he must be well aware of what happened to him; he has time to think at this time of the game—states, 'We have lowered all our boats.' I said yesterday that on his port side he had one steel lifeboat—

**ACTING CHAIR**—And what was the timing of that?

**Mr Doohan**—That was within the first five to 10 minutes.

**ACTING CHAIR**—Correct me if I am wrong, but what you are saying is that there is a total inconsistency between the interrogation reports and the detail that you have given us and the reconstructed deck and engine log. That is the bottom line, isn't it?

**Mr Doohan**—Yes, that is the bottom line. That is one of many bottom lines, but that one will do for now. That one is enough to actually destroy the Germans' story anyway. You have to look at it and read it. It is there. You can get it as soon as you go back—it is all there for you—and read it at your leisure. What I am also saying is that

they had two motorised cutters, one on the port side and one on the starboard side, and one extra one on the port side, which was the captain's boat.

In between those they had on each of the port and starboard sides a large steel lifeboat. Actually one was the one that Detmers was picked up in, and the other one was the one that Bretschneider and Meyer were in.

**ACTING CHAIR**—Were they on davits?

**Mr Doohan**—They were on davits. You have to remember that ship had 400 crew, and they are trying to tell us they had only two lifeboats hanging out there with three motor cutters and a couple of boats they had captured—or one captured boat of the two wooden boats, one from the *Kormoran* and one from the supply ship, which they had met in the Carolines, not in the Indian Ocean. But I will stick to the story.

He decided to abandon ship. According to him, the action finished—there was no action really—at 6 o'clock. He gives the time of the action as one hour. It was literally only a couple of minutes before *Kormoran* had no engines—and that is in the record—and lost all way. So everything after that—this is in the very beginning of the action—about *Sydney* turning around, a heck of a mess and a torpedo hole in the port forepart is a load of garbage because they did not have to go anywhere.

As a matter of fact, one of the German drawings after the action—they gave sketches—showed *Sydney* never having moved from the starboard side. Incidentally, the interrogation note shows some of the gunners saying, 'We fired only to the starboard side because the action occurred only on one side.' We have Jacob Fend. He managed to transfer himself from the port side to the starboard side. Why he did that, I do not know. Perhaps the gunner on the starboard side was killed by *Sydney* because *Sydney* certainly made a mess of her. There is no doubt about that. According to interrogation too, they made a mess of her. *Sydney* made a mess of *Kormoran*. It might have been that the men who were on the 3.7 were rather weak sisters or something and Detmers wanted someone on that gun like Koblitz and Fend to say, 'Yes, we were on that gun' because it was crucial that the starboard 3.7 gun story was 'accepted'. But there was no argument about that gun because that was the one that cleaned up the bridge, so they said. It cleaned up Captain Burnett and his bridge officers. That is the one that really caused all the damage of the *Walrus*. It started that massive fire midships. There is much more to tell than that, but I have done it in short form.

**ACTING CHAIR**—Let us leave it at that just for the time being because we might bring some of the stuff out in questioning. I think that is probably the best way to do it. I do want to get into the open forum at 10 o'clock.

**Senator SANDY MACDONALD**—You have run through the action as has been reported, with a number of inconsistencies, as you see. We have had that story. What is

the story that you believe?

**Mr Doohan**—You mean you've had it from me?

**Senator SANDY MACDONALD**—We have had it from you and we have had it from other people.

**Mr Doohan**—Exactly like that?

**Senator SANDY MACDONALD**—No. You have given your slant to it.

**Mr Doohan**—Excuse me, Senator, I have not given you my slant. I am going from records. It is not my slant.

**Senator SANDY MACDONALD**—No, and that has been very helpful to us. But all through it, and certainly during yesterday, you made the point that that is not really what happened. It would be very helpful to us if you could tell us now what you really think happened.

**Mr Doohan**—I was not there. I can tell you what I think happened, and I have already said so. I have not said that there were Japanese submarines there, but everything points to them being there. *Kormoran* certainly did not do it. There were no German submarines in the Indian Ocean at that time. That is their record and I believe it. They were in the Indian Ocean several times during the war and they did not get into the Indian Ocean at that time. We had Jap submarines in the Indian Ocean before we had German submarines.

I said things yesterday about *Aquitania* and you took all of that on board, and there is a lot more evidence too. We know for a fact—and this is documented as well; I have some of the documents here—that *Aquitania* was the target for *Kormoran*. *Kormoran* could never have handled *Aquitania*. *Aquitania* was a 20-knot ship; she could go to 24. *Kormoran*'s top speed was 18 and at that time she was down to 16, so she could never have caught *Aquitania*.

As for *Aquitania*'s standing orders, as I have told you, I was in one of those ships, *Mauretania*, and we were never allowed to stop for anything. I will give you an example. At sea at one stage we went through a big Arab dhow—and those big Arab dhows carry a lot of men—and we could hear the men in the water, but we could not stop and pick them up.

When *Aquitania* was coming down on that trip from Trincomalee to Singapore—the trip we are talking about—she actually went through a large fishing craft or some sort of large craft; it may have been 50 or 60 tonnes or something. She did the same thing. It is in her record. She went straight through them. She did not stop because we were never



allowed to stop.

We know that *Aquitania* was the target, which *Kormoran* could not do anything about. She could not catch her. Neither would *Aquitania* stop. That was the idea of telling you about what we could do and what we could not do. It has been put forward that he was going to start a fire with oil drums, waste and that sort of thing to try to bring *Aquitania* in close enough, but of course he would never have done that. He would never have got away with it and he would know it too. Therefore, he was banking on something else. He may have been banking on his motor torpedo boat, I don't know, but it would not have done him much good. Here is a picture of the motor torpedo boat if you would like to see. That is LS3, which is *Komet's* boat, but it is exactly the same. This one was taken from the deck to give you an idea of length, but that is the boat. That was aboard *Kormoran*, and that was the boat that Detmers said he did not know he had aboard. His crew all knew it was there, but they all called it a big mine-laying motor boat. These are on the Senate record. Senator Margetts put them on last August.

**ACTING CHAIR**—Let us continue on with the questioning.

**Senator SANDY MACDONALD**—If the *Aquitania* had come across the *Steiermark* in similar circumstances, what would it have done? Would it have accelerated in the opposite direction?

**Mr Doohan**—Yes, absolutely; no doubt. That is what it would have done. The *Kormoran's* captain, Detmers, was not a fool. He would know that. They knew all this from their own intelligence. It was just commonsense; he would know he could not do it himself. Maybe his motor torpedo boat would be able to help, if they could be on the spot. *Aquitania* would have come in probably less than 30 miles across, coming into the coastal shipping at that time, but they would have known roughly. Besides that, they had two aircraft up which could have spotted her from a distance. You have to remember that all this time that *Aquitania* was sitting—eight days—in Singapore someone was sending a signal every day: 'Your target is still here.' No-one has signed this, but I know that is what was happening. When you get a signal, the recipient of the signal has to send back 'Understood'. I think Mr Hitchins mentioned some of that yesterday. This is the set he was talking about.

**Senator SANDY MACDONALD**—Looking at that picture of the torpedo boat, how does it fire its torpedoes? Out the back?

**Mr Doohan**—It can only fire two—stern firing. I accept the fact that this one here would be used for magnetic mines. These were 18-inch torpedoes, not 21-inch torpedoes. Special mines were made for these boats as well so that they could also put out magnetic mines. They could not handle the big mines, but they could handle magnetic mines. I believe that centre tube was for those.

**Senator SANDY MACDONALD**—Surely you would fire torpedoes forward, not backward.

**Mr Doohan**—They used to, but every submarine has fired stern torpedoes ever since they built the modern submarines. They have got four forward and some of them have six; and they have got two aft. I do not know what they have got now because I am not up with it. But they could always fire torpedoes sternwards.

**ACTING CHAIR**—They were fired because they were running. They had the speed and they were running.

**Mr Doohan**—In the Channel, E-boats used to lie off in mist or rain when a convoy was coming through and they would just have their engines ticking over. They were standing still, but they were firing forward. All of a sudden their engines would burst into life with just one big bang and the next thing they had shot forward. They used to do 50 to 60 knots.

These ones used to do 50 knots. They had two, 850 horsepower motors in these. They would fire their torpedoes and then they would suddenly wheel around and go, and you could not get at them. This one was different: he would lie there and he would be ready to go when he started, and gyros would get his depth. All the torpedoes were gyro set. I do not know whether you know that. You need to know these things if you are going into this thing.

**Mr DONDAS**—You seem to think that this action finished about 6 o'clock at night. Is that right?

**Mr Doohan**—It did not finish at 6 o'clock. At 6 o'clock the sighting was made. The official story is it was made at 4 o'clock by Detmers' time—the time that he was using—and 5 o'clock our time, Western Australian time. It really does not make any difference—about the same, by the way.

**Mr DONDAS**—Use of the hour is very important though.

**Mr Doohan**—The hour is very important because *Sydney* is sighting *Kormoran* at 6 o'clock and she is sighting her at extreme distance. She is probably doing around 22 knots—

**Mr DONDAS**—What time did *Kormoran* go down?

**Mr Doohan**—You are going around to the general story. We have got several stories. We have got one at 2 o'clock in the morning. We have got Detmers' story at just after midnight. We have got some at 1 o'clock. We have got some at 8 o'clock at night. Which one do you want?

**Mr DONDAS**—I am looking for one that sounds feasible. The fact that you say that the *Sydney* did do it some damage: it knocked out its engine room, an order was given to abandon ship—

**Senator SANDY MACDONALD**—And most of the crew got off.

**Mr DONDAS**—And then when the crew got off—

**Senator SANDY MACDONALD**—Most of them.

**Mr DONDAS**—They laid charges and they sank their own ship. What time do you really think it was? Not the time that everybody is telling you?

**Mr Doohan**—I believe it was around 10 o'clock at night.

**Mr DONDAS**—About 10 o'clock at night. What evidence did we get through the interrogation of the sailors of the *Kormoran*? What direction was the ship going?

**Mr Doohan**—East, north and west.

**Mr DONDAS**—How fast do they think it was going? Was it five knots, 10 knots or 15 knots? Could they tell?

**Mr Doohan**—The people who were giving the speeds were the bridge officers. They never got above 14 knots. They never changed their speed.

**Mr DONDAS**—No, I am talking about the *Sydney* when it was on its way.

**Mr Doohan**—Always 20 knots. Then it changes because some have still got her going alongside at 14 knots in all of this. In one of his stories, Detmers has got her falling back because she has stopped her engines; she is practically at a stand-still position. What has to be understood is that—I was not there and you were not there—we have got a whole covey of German stories.

If I were a policeman and I were questioning somebody—a group of people—and they all told me there was a dead man on the floor and somebody told a totally different story from the witnesses and somebody else told another one and another one, I would immediately instigate a murder investigation.

**Mr DONDAS**—If we can assume that the *Sydney* was badly damaged and it was going off at some speed—

**Mr Doohan**—I do not assume that, sir.

**Mr DONDAS**—You have to because it—

**Mr Doohan**—I do not have to because I do not believe it was. I am going by the Germans. This is where we are at loggerheads.

**Mr DONDAS**—I am not at loggerheads; I am just curious.

**Mr Doohan**—Not you. The story is at loggerheads. What I am saying and from the record—and naturally there has got to be a little bit of conjecture on some of these things because our only witnesses are Germans, and I am certain there were some Japanese witnesses too, but we will keep to the Germans—is that all the evidence I have and, I think, people way above me have is that the whole German story is a mass of contradictions; it is a mass of lies. I just cannot approach this situation like that. I have to look at what they say. The last 15 to 20 years with me have been involved in finding the holes in the story and being able to say from the record what I am saying now—and I am not the only one.

**ACTING CHAIR**—Why add the dimension of a potential Japanese submarine? If Detmers' was a successful ruse—he was a clever man; there is no doubt about that—and how he did that is for another day, why add the dimension—

**Mr Doohan**—I am putting it today, Senator, because that is part of—

**ACTING CHAIR**—First of all, I am not a senator; Mr Dondas and I belong to the House of Representatives.

**Mr Doohan**—I am sorry. I beg your pardon.

**ACTING CHAIR**—We do not mind being called senator, but that depends on how you want to take it. Let me just put this to you: if it was a successful ruse, I can find nothing in what you have written or in other evidence that we received yesterday that convinces me that there is any evidence that there was a Japanese submarine or, indeed, a German submarine, or a German submarine with Japanese. Can I just suggest to you that that is unnecessary conjecture.

**Mr Doohan**—No, it is not.

**ACTING CHAIR**—I am interested in your response to that.

**Mr Doohan**—We will go back further. Before the supposed *Sydney* action even occurred, *Kormoran* was supposed to have met a supply ship, the *Kulmerland*, in the southern Indian Ocean. There is plenty of evidence to indicate very strongly that at that time the *Kormoran* was in the Carolines in the Japanese mandates. I would like you to look at this map. You know that Eldridge's was the first official history. This is the map

of the Indian Ocean that Eldridge used to formulate his history. If you look at it, you will see on the 16th the *Shenking*.

**ACTING CHAIR**—Which point are you referring to?

**Mr Doohan**—You will see a block just south of the Indian peninsula that says ‘Probably sighted by *Shenking*’.

**ACTING CHAIR**—That is point 12.

**Mr Doohan**—Yes, point 12. It turns out that *Shenking* was not even mentioned anywhere in December 1941. *Shenking* was not mentioned until 1950 as being there and then it was found out—it was an American report—

**ACTING CHAIR**—What was the ‘flagage’ of *Shenking*?

**Mr Doohan**—The *Shenking* was British; she was a British owned merchant cruiser. But at that time she was nowhere near the Indian Ocean, and neither was the *Canton*. You will see on the map that later on she was up in the Bay of Bengal—the track takes you nearly to Madras where they were going to lay mines—and I think it says so in the block there. That was where they spotted another AMC—armed merchant cruiser—which frightened them away. They could not lay their mines there. That ship was erroneously reported later on by the American proceedings in 1950 as also in the Atlantic, but she was not there. I am putting this forward because they worked out the history on the basis of this map of Eldridge’s, and yet the *Shenking* did not even turn up until 1950. So I am saying that this map is a fraud. In official history, that is fraud. It is no good me saying it at this table and the words going off out the window. This inquiry should be looking not at a journalist’s story that you are all hooked on—I do not say that—

**ACTING CHAIR**—With due respect, Mr Doohan, we are not hooked on anything. We want the facts. That is a point I made yesterday.

**Mr Doohan**—That is what we are trying to get, sir.

**ACTING CHAIR**—I do not want to be confrontationist with you, but let me make it very clear that we want to deal with the facts. I am saying to you, again with due respect to you, that you have not convinced me this morning or, indeed, in your written submission that the Japanese in any way were involved in this. In fact, we have heard some pretty reasonable evidence yesterday that suggestions along those lines are purely based on anecdote. I have heard nothing from you this morning to indicate that yours is not based on anecdote.

**Mr Doohan**—I am putting it here. If you just want to leave here and say you are not going to listen to me because I do not say the same story—

**ACTING CHAIR**—We are listening; we are giving you a lot of time.

**Mr DONDAS**—Have you had the opportunity over the last 50 years of evaluating the records of Stateships—ships sailing up and down the Western Australian coast such as the *Koolinda* and the *Koolama*?

**Mr Doohan**—Yes.

**Mr DONDAS**—The *Koolinda* reported in December 1941 when it was travelling from Darwin to Perth that it was shadowed by a submarine or something. Was that in the ship's log?

**Mr Doohan**—I have heard about it but I have not—

**Mr DONDAS**—You have not gone to the trouble to have a look at what was in the Stateships archives?

**Mr Doohan**—I have reports of at least a dozen sightings of unidentified submarines right through from 1939—and you should have seen them too—around the Australian coast, which were obviously Japanese submarines.

**Mr DONDAS**—Which part of the Australian coast?

**Mr Doohan**—The east coast, the west coast, the south coast.

**Mr DONDAS**—How many sightings on the west coast?

**Mr Doohan**—I think there were about three. I will have a look at the record again.

**Mr DONDAS**—Stateships, as I understand it, had made some information available to Defence in those days that they had thought they had seen some unusual activity, especially in the north-west of Western Australia.

**Mr Doohan**—I do not want to drag Group Captain Bourne back into it, but he was on maritime work and I believe he may have—

**Mr DONDAS**—Stateships still have records, though, don't they, and you have not evaluated those records?

**Mr Doohan**—I have not evaluated the records. The only record I was interested in was that of the *Koolinda* because she picked up 31 Germans in a boat. That is the reason I was interested in *Koolinda*. I was also interested in *Koolinda* because Barbara Winter gave a photograph of the wrong boat in her book.

**Mr DONDAS**—The reason I am interested in the *Koolinda* is that, at age two, I was coming back on it from Darwin on 18 December 1941.

**Mr Doohan**—If you were only aged two, you would have to do some research too. There is a lot of work here to do and I have been doing a lot of this on my own for years, though not for the last 50 years because 50 years ago the war was just over and I was coming home from the islands. I had joined the Army and I had gone to New Guinea so I was not worrying too much for a while. I did have a bit to do though.

One of the people you had yesterday spoke about a man called Mitslaff and how reliable Mitslaff was. Mitslaff's interrogation notes gave them as coming back from the Timor Sea, not coming up from the south. In his interrogation notes, when he was asked why they were coming back from the north through the Timor Sea, his answer was that it was because they were going down to Fremantle to look for ships—not coming up from the southern Indian Ocean. Mitslaff told a totally different story from what Mr Loane, I think it was, said yesterday. Mitslaff was a liar by his own reports. This is what makes some of us angry. We are ex-servicemen, we are Australians, and our word is not good enough.

**ACTING CHAIR**—I think enough information was given yesterday on that one to raise some questions about that evidence. When you get the *Hansard* record, you will see that I asked that question and raised some question marks about the validity of that evidence. I know we have to look at it, but again there are some inconsistencies, in my view.

**Mr Doohan**—It has to be examined, and it has to be examined at a higher level. For example, did anybody take a photocopy of this map, because it is a fraud? It is in your original—

**ACTING CHAIR**—We will need to incorporate that in the *Hansard* record. Is it the wish of the committee that the document be incorporated in the transcript of evidence? There being no objection, it is so ordered.

*The map read as follows—*

**Senator MARGETTS**—Yesterday, we had a fairly strong view put that as many as possible of the records in Japan had been checked and, as much as possible, people interviewed strenuously said that there had been no Japanese submarine involvement in this engagement. I guess that is what the committee is responding to at the moment. What, in your opinion, is the missing information link? Do you believe there is signals information, do you believe there is something, which will verify the change in the time and order that will enable this committee to come out with different information?

Right from the beginning we were given information about signals or signal stations not being available, and there seems to be conflicting information about that. What are the sources of information that are as yet unavailable that you think would enable the committee to have the evidence that would lead us to accept the scenario that you are presenting?

**Mr Doohan**—Are you talking about signals?

**Senator MARGETTS**—Yes. The scenario that you are presenting is that the *Sydney* was not lured in as close as we have been led to believe.

**Mr Doohan**—I am absolutely certain she was not, and the evidence shows that she was not.

**Senator MARGETTS**—Okay, your scenario goes on: *Sydney* was not lured in—none of you could work out why they were not in battle stations at the time. So we did not have to come to a scenario of surrender or whatever because going in that close never happened. That is the scenario that you are presenting. What kind of information, archival or other, that has not been made available so far would give the committee the information they would need to verify it?

**Mr Doohan**—In the first place, there are the Japanese records. Most Japanese records, particularly submarine records, were destroyed in August 1945. The Americans took some back to the United States. They still have those. Not too many people have seen them. Any records of a submarine involved in the sinking of an Australian ship by mistake—the Japanese certainly did not want to sink *Sydney*—that may have involved Germany or Japan or their involvement before the war were never going to be put on a piece of paper to go into archives—particularly with 645 men dead. That was never going to go onto archives; you will never see that on any record. The Japanese records themselves were not put together—they started to reconstruct them. You can do anything with reconstruction. The first ones came out in 1952. That was on I-124, a Japanese submarine, sunk on 24 January 1942 in Beagle Gulf.

Incidentally, after the war the Americans got Japanese help to back them up and cooperate with them in putting a scam over about the I-124. This is how good the Japanese records are. The Americans said that they cut open I-124 just after Pearl Harbour



and got a veritable treasure trove of codes. In other words, they were saying that they got the JN25 codes from the I-124—that they cut her open; she was still airtight. She is still lying on the bottom, most of her airtight. We are not allowed to go anywhere near her. Mike McCarthy at the Maritime Museum actually did this study in 1989 and confirmed this—the United States government and the Japanese government right up until 1989 were saying, ‘Yes, that is so. She was cut open and the Americans got all the codes. That is why they did not know before Pearl Harbour that the Japanese were coming because they did not get these codes until after.’

As it turned out, and it has been totally proven, nobody ever cut into that submarine. She was left undisturbed and she is still undisturbed. No-one got those things. So if I-124 were to be brought up—she is only 120 feet down; she is not in deep water—her radio shack would still be watertight. I do not know whether she was involved or not, but any submarine on wartime stand by is on radio traffic all the time. She would have had a standing traffic watch. All the flimsies and everything else would still be in that sub because it was such a short time before I-124 had to stand by in Manila Bay to lay mines on 7 December—or 8 December our time. So there are records there that we can get at.

As far as the signals go, we are all certain that signals came from *Sydney* before the action and during the action. I have a file here, which I am not going to bring out—but see me if ever you want to see it—which shows the total lies that were told about our signals. I am talking about the crystal ball signals.

I will just run through this very quickly if you do not mind. In the *Sydney* episode, on the morning the search started for *Sydney* survivors—the 25th—they found two boats up on the beach. The first boat they saw, at 7.20 in the morning, was 180 miles from shore. That is how close the action was to the shore. That was von Gosseln’s boat. One of Group Captain Bourne’s Hudsons made the sighting at 7.20 in the morning. At 9 o’clock, two boats were found on the beach, one at Red Bluff, one at Seventeen Mile Beach. Certain other things happened. Just on 11 o’clock in the morning, a policeman left Carnarvon to go up to see who was at Red Beach up at Quobba.

But I have got a signal there that came out, according to its time of origin and receipt, at 23 or 24 minutes past midnight on that day. Somebody had a crystal ball when they sent that signal because it starts off that at 7.20 this first boat was found, then at nine about two boats on the beach at Quobba, and people will be leaving about 10.30 from Carnarvon.

What I am saying is quite simple: this is a signal from the Australian Navy Board to Admiralty, China. This is telling him, at 23 or 24 minutes past midnight on the 25th, all the things that are happening at 7.20, 9 o’clock, 11 o’clock; it is a crystal ball job. I mention that because that is the calibre of signals we can produce to show that you cannot believe anything in this, and you cannot even believe our signals; and you certainly cannot believe our people. The stumbling block is that nobody wants to query the German story

or the Japanese story. After all, they are our biggest trading partner right now. So it is still today. This is why this inquiry should get further than this. You have got 645 men dead here and you are looking at those deaths too. You are not just looking at a German story. You are looking at 645 Australians, and that is what you should be looking at, with respect.

**ACTING CHAIR**—Just to finish then, the bottom line for Mr Doohan is that there is some sort of major conspiracy involved. Is that what you are saying?

**Mr Doohan**—It is not a word in the dictionary, sir. Yes, there is a conspiracy. There has been a massive conspiracy.

**ACTING CHAIR**—A conspiracy and a cover-up. By whom?

**Mr Doohan**—You have not got time to hear it here.

**ACTING CHAIR**—We can give you five minutes to tell us. You can tell us in five minutes who is involved in the conspiracy.

**Mr Doohan**—I will try. The conspiracy started, sir, in 1937 with the Japanese attack into China. It started then with the Roosevelt administration's plan to bring Japan into war, merely by subsidising Japan's war in China. The figures are there, the facts are there. The United States subsidised the Japanese war in China until the beginning of 1941, or the end of 1940, to the tune of an average of \$225 million a year. At that time, it was a lot of money. They were giving Chiang Kai Shek the tune of about \$40-50 million a year. They were subsidising the Chinese war with Japan. Japan was quite happy at the time to be pushed into that situation. All it wanted was for her to suddenly lose this war material. We were doing it too. Bob Menzies got the name 'Pig Iron Bob' because Australia was sending war material too—pig iron. Holland was doing it, Britain was doing it.

But at the end of 1940 Roosevelt suddenly said to his war cabinet, 'This is where we stop the supplies to Japan.' And he did. By 1941 he had cut out everything. By July 1941 not only had he stopped all trade with Japan, Britain, Australia and Holland also stopped all trade with Japan. Japan was in a no-go situation, she had nothing. She had to get that material.

This is why she went to negotiate with the United States through the last few months of 1941. They were forced negotiations. The record is there in Roosevelt's so-called secret talks with his war cabinet. Roosevelt, his war cabinet, the United States military, the British military and Australia—the record is all there. We were reading their codes. In particular we were reading the diplomatic code—the purple code. They were reading this purple code all the time but to take one time sequence, from August until Pearl Harbour, 7 December, we were reading—it is all on the record—everything that Honolulu consulate was reporting back to Tokyo and vice versa on everything they were

setting up for the attack on Pearl Harbour.

The American government was then receiving reports from their military commanders in the Pacific about the defence of Pearl Harbour and these reports were saying that the big danger was an air attack with carriers. One report committee actually said that they would use six carriers, and they did use six carriers. All this happened for three months. Every ship that moved in its berth in Pearl Harbour was being reported back, in the end, daily—in the first part of August it was twice weekly. All this—every battle ship, every ship that changed its berth, whether they were using torpedo nets—had to be reported back to Japan.

In these reports that were being put out by the United States government—there are copies; you can have copies—there was information that torpedo bombers would be used. Everything was laid out. The whole lot was there. Incidentally, Roosevelt was also deploying his ships from the Pacific to the Atlantic. Admiral Kimmel in Hawaii and General Walter Short, the army commander, in Hawaii were sending back complaints to Roosevelt: ‘You are starving us; even our crews are not up to battle strength, they are at peacetime strength.’ Roosevelt just sent them back a message, ‘We would not want to make our ships unhappy by overcrowding.’ The evidence is there. Short could not even get early aircraft warning.

I am putting forward the fact that Pearl Harbour was a set-up. In the short term, if our navy had suddenly come out, if they had thought that there was something wrong with *Sydney*, they would have had all those characters out against the wall as soon as they could, I think. They could not do that. We—and I say ‘we’ in inverted commas—could not let the Japanese know that we knew that they were involved with *Aquitania* even; we could not give any indication at all—and we certainly knew when *Sydney* got it after *Kormoran* had gone; we knew what it was. We must have got a heck of a shock in Canberra; nobody expected any physical Japanese involvement. If that had come out in a complaint to the League of Nations at that time or to Japan, Japan would have realised or suspected that we were reading her codes, for a start. And they would not have sent 31 navy ships and capital ships to Hawaii to be knocked off—as far as they were concerned—by the Americans before they even got there.

We could not put forward anything publicly indicating that we believed there were Japanese involved. Actually, it did come out. The first report from London was a newspaper report saying that a Japanese submarine sank the *Sydney*. That was wiped straightaway. It is on the record. Even Admiral Crace mentioned a Japanese submarine. Others mentioned submarines. Very quickly they switched it around to Vichy submarines—not Japanese. It is all in the record. There were no Vichy submarines; they were nowhere near us. Kimmel had been told nothing. They were not even given a purple machine. They were the only ones who did not get a purple machine to read the Japanese traffic. They were the only ones who never knew.

There were eight hearings on this—seven not public and one a congressional inquiry where Democrats and Republicans came together to shut it up and agree on the same thing. That was the problem. We could not at that stage of the game even hint at Japanese—there were no Japanese; it was a German warship, it was an auxiliary cruiser, it was legitimate combat between two ships. They were the best ones. That is what it was. So that is the background.

**ACTING CHAIR**—And that is the basis—

**Mr Doohan**—It is not my basis; that is the reported basis.

**ACTING CHAIR**—That is the basis for your assertion that a Japanese submarine was involved with the *Sydney*?

**Mr Doohan**—It is more than that. The evidence says that the *Kormoran* was in the Carolines just before she came back and unintentionally met the *Sydney*, though we have two people aboard the *Kormoran* who said that they were in the Carolines. One was a German and afterwards he changed his tune because someone gave him a kick in the backside, I think. Shu Ah Fah, the Chinese, said that they left the Carolines, or the area, where they would have met the *Kulmerland* because that was where the *Kulmerland* operated, not down here. She was an unarmed supply ship coming out of Kobe in Japan. She certainly would not have been sent thousands of miles. Shu Ah Fah said that they left the Carolines on 22 October. The weekly intelligence report for the beginning of October said that one of the two German raiders in the western Pacific, meaning the Carolines, is probably the *Steiermark*: raider G, ship 41, 9,800 tonnes.

Remember, we did not even know—when the *Sydney* was coming down—the *Steiermark*, which was the *Kormoran*, ever existed. We did not know there was a raider in the Indian Ocean; we knew the *Steiermark* was there, though, because Group Captain Bourne himself was looking for the *Steiermark* at the end of October and right up until almost the time the *Sydney* left Fremantle for Singapore and when *Aquitania* came into the picture.

So what I am telling everybody here is that what I am saying is not some crazy conspiracy. I have been put about as a conspiracy wielder. I am banned from the press here. I am banned from the *West Australian*. I am banned from the ABC. If you want to see the documentation, you can have it. I am getting out to you now what I can because when I leave this table I am going to be dumb again. I will never get in anywhere and it is up to you.

**ACTING CHAIR**—Thank you very much.

**Mr Doohan**—Will you be talking about the grave on Christmas Island? This is the grave with the rock on it. That is a photograph of the rock, and I made the cross that is on

it and sent it up there. That is the grave of Norman Howard and there is his tombstone. A resident found it after I got him to look for it. It is not the grave of the sailor, it is the grave of Norman Howard who worked for the company on Christmas Island. He was buried there in 1924 and this is a photograph of his tombstone. It had been off the grave for years. Someone took it and hid it. I do not know whether you have seen those before. These are the things that you should be looking at.

**ACTING CHAIR**—Thank you very much. We will get you involved in the open forum as well. I think that we have given you a pretty good hearing.

**Mr Doohan**—I do not need the open forum, sir. I have said everything I wanted to say and it will appear in the transcript. We will be following it through in the parliament.

[10.27 a.m.]

**HEINRICH, Mr Juergen, 18 Warwick Road, Sorrento, Western Australia**

**ACTING CHAIR**—For those of you who were not here yesterday, Mr Heinrich is the nephew of one of the *Kormoran* crew. Mr Heinrich, would you like to make a short statement?

**Senator MARGETTS**—During the break I was approached by Mr John Sharkey, Officer of Arms, Senior Representative, Allied Armed Forces Trust, Australian Division, formerly of Her Majesty's Brigade of Guards, Spandau Prison, Berlin, Germany, who has asked me to accept a submission.

**ACTING CHAIR**—Has the gentleman gone now?

**Senator MARGETTS**—Yes, I believe so.

Resolved:

That the submission be formally accepted as evidence.

**Mr Heinrich**—Thank you very much for the opportunity to address this panel. I come before you today not as an ex-German citizen interested in clearing the names of former fellow countrymen, as some might expect, but as a citizen concerned about 645 Australian and 80 German servicemen who lost their lives in a battle; yet 57 years on their loved ones are as much in the dark as they were in 1941, never having learned the truth. Nor do I wish to throw further muck at service personnel on either side who were prepared to die for their country's policies.

To me, the weight of evidence confirms that both captains and crews did their very best and acted honourably in war terms, and the cover-up and conspiracy theories which abound about the events that followed in fact relate to much higher authorities. Seamen all over the world have a kind of bond, even if enemies. To prove that, I would like to read out some words of former enemy Otto Jurgensen, who is a spokesman for the *Kormoran* group today. He spoke at the Hall of Commemoration in the Navy Memorial at Kiel in 1991. He said:

Dear Comrades, Dear *Kormoran* . . . , Dear Guests,

We have gathered here in the Hall of Commemoration to commemorate our comrades who lost their lives in the action off the Western Australian coast of November 1941. At the same time we honour the brave crew of the Australian cruiser, HMAS *Sydney*, who found their last place of rest on board this ship in the depths of the Indian Ocean. Both crews were prepared to sacrifice their lives for their countries and both manifested this willingness with their dead comrades. We therefore commemorate in honour of the dead members of both crews in all groups, sincerely wishing that there always will be real mutual trust and everlasting peace between the two nations.

Today I wish to discuss a couple of points relevant to the sinking of the *Sydney*. Much has been said so far, but I would really like to touch on two points and this concerns the archives and the lead-up into the action itself. I undertook a research trip in 1995 to the Bundesarchiv in Germany. After working my way through the right department, I eventually selected relevant material to look at. As soon as I was given the manila folders I got a shock, because it became quite clear to me that the German archives were not under German control since the front cover displayed a prominent gold stamp stating clearly, 'This is the property of the British Admiralty.' Of course, that will go a long way to addressing a lot of things that people are asking to search for in the German archives. However, looking through the papers, I felt something was missing. Upon inquiry to the clerk, I was informed that if I wanted to find them I had to go to the British Admiralty in London. But there was material there. I found the log of the *Kormoran* which went up to 24 November 1941, along with another paper. I have that section of the log here with me.

Amongst those papers was a sheet of paper that did not have any relationship to the whole thing. It may have been misplaced, but it happened to be there. It turned out to be a 1941 translation from a French newspaper telling of the action and that, before the action, the *Kormoran* had been sailing disguised under the Norwegian flag. I thought that was different. Along with everybody else, I believed that the *Kormoran* had been sailing under the Dutch flag of *Straat Malakka*. I also remember having read that members of the *Kormoran* had said in an article I saw earlier that the *Kormoran* had Norwegian sideboards showing. Once I started to look at this situation, I found that other people had said this in corroboration of it, and one of the people has been quoted here quite often and often in a different context. It is a Chinese man called Shu Ah Fah—who we heard of him earlier this morning—who was brought back with the *Kormoran* crew after the battle, and he stated clearly that the *Kormoran* was flying the Norwegian flag. Obviously, it is not just a coincidence.

Adding further weight to the scenario, on the log itself it states that, while waiting for the supplies for *Kulmerland* in October 1941, the sides were cleaned off and then repainted, but it did not actually state to what. So I think there is much corroboration that there is a possibility that, instead of *Kormoran* sailing under the accepted flag of *Straat Malakka*, it was actually sailing under a Norwegian flag. A lot of people may ask: what is so special about that? There is something special about that since the log also shows—whether we believe in the log or not—that from the 18th through to the 24th the *Kormoran* was supplied by the *Kulmerland*. It states here that, while they were waiting for the *Kulmerland* to arrive, the sides of the *Kormoran* had been scraped off and repainted. If this is a fact, then from then on we can surmise as to the action situation. As far as I can see, it becomes a completely new scenario. We know that the British read the German code since before the beginning of the World War. It was one of the main concerns that nobody would ever find out.

We also believe from other people that it was very well known to the naval hierarchy that the *Kormoran* was cruising the waters off Western Australia. We have got

direct evidence from Reg Landers, who discussed it widely, and he said in direct evidence that he was actually listening to the *Kormoran* himself. I do not know whether you have got a submission there. However, if that is so, they knew the name of the *Kormoran* and the colours it was given were the Dutch flag *Straat Malakka*. The British who therefore read the code had this information about the *Kormoran*. They also had information about the *Kulmerland*, knew that the *Kulmerland* was in the area supplying *Kormoran* with material, that *Kulmerland* was flying the Norwegian flag and that the *Kulmerland* was unarmed. What they did not know, however, was—as I mentioned before—that the *Kormoran* was not sailing any longer under the Dutch flag but now flying the Norwegian flag. The reason they did not know that was that it was never put to air. So, in other words, it could not have been deciphered, it could not have been read.

Other contributory factors were the instructions from the British Admiralty to all the warships, made in October 1941, not to sink any further unarmed merchant vessels but to arrest them so that they could be reused.

The attrition rate, in the Atlantic and elsewhere, was horrific. The fateful day of 19 November 1941 sees the *Sydney* steaming down from up north suddenly confronted with a merchant vessel of a similar look to the *Kulmerland* flying a Norwegian flag. They figure it to be the unarmed *Kulmerland*, since they had been advised by navy intelligence that the *Kormoran* was flying the Dutch flag. Burnett, acting on his orders to arrest unarmed merchantmen, moved in to do just that. He closed in to approximately a thousand metres, as per orders. Since boarding parties in those days did not use high-powered speed boats but cumbersome rowing boats, the distance between the ships had to be kept to a minimum.

This also explains the white-coated personnel on board the *Sydney*, since they were not on battle stations but routinely arresting a harmless ship. However, the harmless ship or lamb was really the wolf in disguise and had surprise on its side. The rest of it is part of history, as we can see. However, one of the things where I differ from other people is my belief that a cover-up started following this battle.

I believe it was started, in the first instance, to smooth out the monumental blunder that cost the navy its pride along with all its complement of officers and men. The navy's lack of explanation soon brought to the fore speculation as to the involvement of a third party—the Japanese submarine. This suspected Japanese involvement had the potential—they had their work cut out—to influence the Japanese to call off their suspected surprise attack on Pearl Harbour.

The main point that I really want to make is that the cover-up started to conceal the blunder of the navy—of the hierarchy/government—in the first instance, causing the loss of the *Sydney* along with its full complement. Secondly, *Kormoran* was sailing under a Norwegian flag. Thirdly, the incident had the potential to disclose to the enemy the existence of a code-breaking system called 'Ultra'. Fourthly, the incident had the potential



to cause the Japanese to re-evaluate their plans regarding the attack on Pearl Harbour. Thank you.

**ACTING CHAIR**—Thank you very much. Interesting.

**Senator SANDY MACDONALD**—I just have two points. The first is that the weight you give to the evidence of the Chinese laundryman I think is extraordinary, and the second point that I would make is that, in evidence provided to us, not all naval codes were broken. In fact, very few were broken for the whole duration of the war. You allege that the naval codes were all broken and that Ultra had access to them. I do not believe that is correct. Would you like to make a comment on either of those?

**Mr Heinrich**—Yes, I do. I am not an expert on any of it; I can only repeat what I have read. My information, from numerous books of various kinds, is that there were 30,000 people sitting in Bletchley Park listening to everything that was said. There were a further 40,000 people sitting in New York BSC listening to everything that was said around the world. Whether they read everything or were able to decipher everything in time would be conjecture. However, the fact is that historians have stated in numerous books on the subject—books on Ultra at sea, Ultra in the Mediterranean and all over the world—and numerous people clearly state that Bletchley Park was the sole purpose for that. Whether they knew everything or not, I am not here to say. But it is clear that the navy knew that *Kormoran* was in the waters. We know that from people who were actively participating—Reg Landers and others.

**Senator MARGETTS**—So you believe that the ships were close together or were closer than would normally be considered safe?

**Mr Heinrich**—Since I know no more than anybody else and have not got a crystal ball, I have to rely on everybody else's evidence and things that I do see. On the probabilities of it all, I do believe that, yes, they did come close under the scenario that I described. We know that today two ships would stay off probably 10 or 12 miles without any problem. Speedboats would race forward and backward. In those days, that was not done. They used rowing boats for boarding parties and, if you wanted to go across the ocean for 10 or 12 miles in a rowing boat, you knew that you could have problems.

**ACTING CHAIR**—I think in more contemporary terms you would use a helicopter. The important point that you have raised, which we have not heard before of course, is the Norwegian flag. That just seems to me to add weight to an argument that this was part of a successful ruse on the part of Detmers.

**Mr Heinrich**—I would see it like that, yes.

**ACTING CHAIR**—If you would like to take a seat back there, you can of course participate in the open forum. Thank you very much. That was helpful.

[10.43 a.m.]

**ANDERSON, Mr James Noel, Liveringa Station, PO Box 1241, Derby, Western Australia 6728**

**BAXTER, Mr Milton Alexander, 2 Ethelwyn Street, Hilton, Western Australia 6163**

**EVANS, Mr Noddy Pete, 13 Field Street, Mount Lawley, Western Australia 6050**

**FISCHER, Mr Robert, 33 Tolworth Way, Embleton, Western Australia 6062**

**FISHER, Mr Thomas Patrick, 105 Edward Street, Osborne Park, Western Australia 6017**

**FLETCHER, Mr Robin Roy, 117 Carawatha Avenue, Mount Nasura, Western Australia**

**HILLIER, Mr Graeme, 49 Oban Road, City Beach, Western Australia 6015**

**KEIGHTLEY, Mr Kenneth Gordon, 43 Bedford Road, Ardross, Western Australia**

**LAMB, Mr Richard George, Po Box 355, Capel, Western Australia 6271**

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**ACTING CHAIR**—With the open forum, can those people who want to be involved come forward and sit in the front row. Put your hand up when you want to be a part of the proceedings. We need to keep it short and sharp, and we will play it as we find it. Mrs McDonald, we will take you first, if you would like to make two points.

**Mrs McDonald**—Thank you for the opportunity. I just want to raise one issue

myself with my scenario of why Burnett might have come in close, but I would like to clarify something for the committee from yesterday's testimony. Group Captain Bourne was making it clear to you that he definitely searched on 23 November and you were asking him what the significance of that was. He said, 'It means that *Aquitania* radioed.' I do not think he made it clear enough, because to me it means that there was a 4½-day delay in initiating the search. The reason for that delay has always been: 'We did not know that the *Sydney* was in trouble until 3 p.m. on 24 November when the *Trocas* picked up the Germans.'

The *Aquitania* picked up Germans on the 23rd but was never meant to have radioed; she was meant to have headed all the way to the eastern states without breaking radio silence. If we were searching on the 23rd—I have just this morning heard some evidence that we were actually searching on the 22nd—that blows that reason for the 4½-day delay out of the water, unless we were just searching because we had some concerns that *Sydney* was overdue. The point is that we have always stated that we did not search for 4½ days because we did not know that there was anything wrong. His point is that we must have known that something was wrong for him to be up there on the 23rd.

That leads to the signals, and I firmly believe that jammed signals were heard. *Kormoran* always jammed signals sent by any ship that she was involved with. The radio operator has recently said that he did jam signals, so I do believe signals were sent.

The second point is that I feel there are a number of scenarios as to why Burnett might have come in close. He would have come in close if he had information from intelligence or if he saw something on board the *Kormoran* that led him to believe that she was a merchant or supply ship, in particular the *Kulmerland*. So if he had been told to go in and intercept and capture the *Kulmerland*, which was not armed anywhere near like what the *Kormoran* was, he may have done that. If he wished to capture the *Kormoran* and thought he had already put her out of action, he may have come in close if she had surrendered. Other people have suggested this, and it fits in with the German version of the two stages of evacuation from the ship and the two stages of readiness. So it is a possibility that she thought she had dealt with her and she came in close to do something else. If she thought that the *Kormoran* still had prisoners, particularly Australian prisoners from the *Mareeba*, she was not going to stand off and blast her out of the water, so she may have come in then.

Finally, if *Kormoran* had fired an underwater torpedo, she may have been damaged in such a way that she drifted in parallel beside them. Then the rest of the crew would have seen the ships parallel and side by side. For a long time the Germans have said that they did not fire an underwater torpedo. To be able to fire it the *Kormoran* would have had to have been stopped or nearly stopped in the water. Detmers said in his interrogation that he was ordered to stop; he changed that in further interrogations. But you have to aim the underwater torpedo with your ship, so obviously you have to be stopped. I always thought that the Germans said that they did not fire their underwater torpedo. In my

interview with Herman Ortman, he admits now that they did fire the underwater torpedo. He was under the impression that it had not been fired, but he was told in the camp that it was fired and he showed me a German book written by Detmers with a pictorial of the battle that states that the underwater torpedo was fired at 8.35 p.m.—obviously fired at a drifting, on fire and harmless *Sydney*, which I find a little unusual.

**ACTING CHAIR**—Yes, there is a little inconsistency there.

**Mrs McDonald**—They are my scenarios of why she may have come in close.

**ACTING CHAIR**—But you would agree that the Norwegian flag argument adds ammunition to your argument about them being in close? Had you heard the Norwegian flag argument before?

**Mrs McDonald**—The Norwegian flag argument has been around for a long time. In fact, whether she was flying the Norwegian flag or the Dutch flag was the initial argument, and Barbara Winter goes into a fair bit of detail as to why it was not the Norwegian flag but the Dutch flag.

**ACTING CHAIR**—We are going to hear evidence from her in due course.

**Mr DONDAS**—Was there any evidence at the time as to why the *Aquitania* did not discharge its prisoners into Fremantle instead of keeping them on board all the way round to Sydney?

**Mrs McDonald**—Yes, I have read the report of the captain of the *Aquitania*. He said that, as he came towards Fremantle, he did try to break radio silence and he was not successful. I honestly believe that there was radio contact between Fremantle and *Aquitania*, and there is some anecdotal evidence that is not to a stage that can be presented to anybody with any credibility. But she did sit off Gauge roads and she actually wanted to unload those Germans there and was told to move on. I only have anecdotal information that I am gathering, so I cannot prove that.

I am like Captain Bourne and the others: I do not believe that the *Aquitania* would have stopped unless she was ordered to stop. But her version was that she tried to radio. She did not radio initially because she thought everybody knew about it and she was not supposed to break radio silence. When she attempted to, she could not get through.

I do think more work needs to be done on the *Aquitania*, and I think more work needs to be done on the *Sydney*'s escort of the *Zealandia* to the Sunda Strait. I believe that the *Sydney* left earlier, before that handover—and I believe that she did that because she was seeking intelligence information about the ship she was to meet.

**ACTING CHAIR**—Thank you very much indeed. I will give priority to those who

have not appeared. We then will come back.

**Mr Fischer**—Basically, I am representing myself. I have had an interest in the *Sydney* for quite some time. Like you, I am an ex-RAN serviceman. Fortunately, I was in the lower deck instead of the wardroom, so I probably had more fun than you.

My involvement with the *Sydney* started when I went through *Cerberus*—or, as the older hands call it, *Flinders*—and we were given the history of the Australian navy, and they mentioned the *Sydney* in passing. It was not an in-depth historical view of it. It was just: HMAS *Sydney* in 1941 engaged with the raider *Kormoran* with all hands lost.

It would have been in 1987 when I got heavily involved in scuba diving; I was doing what they call a wreck diver's course. We had a meeting at the Tradewinds Hotel in Fremantle, and Mike McCarthy from the Maritime Museum came along. Part of the course was that we had to research a wreck off the Western Australian coast, and 'mugs mullins' decided that he would have a look at the *Sydney*. I raised it with Mike McCarthy, and he jumped down my throat. So that really got me interested, in that there had to be something there. So I started researching it.

Unfortunately, due to situations and all the rest of it, I have not had the opportunity to do a lot of the research that other people have done. I have had to base my ideas and all the rest on research that others have done. I would at some stage like to go to Germany and search German records for the *Kormoran* and the *Kulmerland* because it would bear some relevance. I have some notes here that I will refer to.

**ACTING CHAIR**—Do you speak German?

**Mr Fischer**—I speak a little bit of German, but I do have quite a few German friends; my German is fairly pitiful. I also have a lot of Japanese friends, and my Japanese is also fairly pitiful.

There are a couple of points that I think bear relevance to this. On or about 16 April 1941, the *Kormoran* took on the disguise of the *Straat Malakka*. Detmers says it in his books and Winters brings it up in her book. If we are to believe this, from 16 April until 19 November, the *Kormoran* is disguised as the *Straat Malakka*.

Unfortunately, to me, that does not make sense. My opinion is that raider captains would be schizophrenic, for want of a better term; they would be changing their disguises on a regular basis. To go for a period of seven to eight months disguised as the one warship, having been in action, having sunk vessels, having chased vessels and having had them see you, and for you still maintain the same disguise, I am afraid, does not make sense.

We go back to around 29 September, when the *Kormoran* had a rendezvous with

the *Kulmerland*. Then, again, both Detmers and Barbara Winter in their books state that around this time, while the *Kormoran* was riding high—she was unloaded, and all the rest of it—they stopped, they repainted the vessel and they carried out some engine repairs. They also made the point that there was no particular hurry to get to the rendezvous point with the *Kulmerland* anyhow because, once the *Kulmerland* was there, it would have to wait around 10 days for the *Kormoran* to show up. So they were in no hurry to get there. They say that they stopped the boat while she was riding high, they repainted it and carried out engine repairs, and let it drift while the paint dried. Unfortunately, they do not go into any detail on what—

**ACTING CHAIR**—That was in September 1941?

**Mr Fischer**—That was on or around 29 September 1941.

**ACTING CHAIR**—If the official history by Eldridge is correct, in April she was off the West African coast.

**Mr Fischer**—Like I said, my research is based on the information that I have available to me. In other words, I have Detmers book and I have Barbara Winter's book. Both of them state that on or around 16 April is when she took on the disguise of the *Straat Malakka*.

**ACTING CHAIR**—That is fine. But also on 26 September—again, according to the official history—just off the south-west coast of India she attacked. So I am not disagreeing in any way with what you are saying; it is just that there is a certain consistency in that.

**Mr Fischer**—Yes. Unfortunately, like I said, I am going off the information that I have available. I have not been able to delve into it because, unfortunately, I do not have the resources that would enable me to do it.

**ACTING CHAIR**—Your second point?

**Mr Fischer**—My rating in the navy was as a gunnery rating or quartermaster gunner. This is what stuck in my craw: if we go to the German account of the engagement, we have the Germans heading in a northerly direction on a course of about 24 or 25 degrees. They spot the *Sydney* and they turn to a course of around 260 degrees and increase speed to around 16½ knots; Detmers says that one of the engines packed in and it reduced the speed to 14 knots.

If we take that into account and we take into account the prevailing seas at that time, the seas are striking the *Kormoran* abeam. We are led to believe that a gunnery engagement took place while *Kormoran* was travelling at 14 knots with the sea striking at

her beam. Rough calculations that I have done would indicate that, if that were the case, the *Kormoran* would be rolling anywhere between 15 and 20 degrees off centre line. That would give her a total roll of somewhere between 30 and 40 degrees. You are an ex-naval officer; can you imagine what gunnery would be like if you were rolling 30 to 40 degrees?

**ACTING CHAIR**—That, of course, might explain the over and under.

**Mr Fischer**—It would definitely explain the over and under, and the over and under, and the over and under ad infinitum. It would be an extremely hard target to try and hit. I do not care how close you are or how far away you are, it would be an extremely hard target to hit, and it would be extremely difficult to maintain the rates of fire that the Germans say they maintained. You cannot do it; it is physically impossible.

I have done it or I have tried to do it and you cannot; you cannot hit your target with any degree of accuracy. One in five, maybe one in seven shots may come close to the target or hit it. Any more than that is wishful thinking. The only way of maintaining or achieving the rates of fire stated by the Germans would be if your bow or your stern were into the prevailing seas at that time—ideally your bow, because you would have a hell of a lot better ride.

**ACTING CHAIR**—Are they your only two points?

**Mr Fischer**—There are other points that I would love to raise. I have had a talk to your secretary. Unfortunately, I never had the chance to prepare a submission formally before this meeting took place. I will be preparing a submission and putting it in to you.

**ACTING CHAIR**—We look forward to receiving that.

**Mr Fischer**—There are other points I would wish to make, but obviously I do not have the time to do so. As I have said, there are a hell of a lot of points that need to be made. One thing I would suggest: regarding the *Sydney* and her movements, we know when she released the *Zealandia*, we know where she released it from. Has anybody sat down and worked out a track course for the *Sydney* back to Fremantle to try to calculate where she would have been at that particular time?

**ACTING CHAIR**—Yes.

**Mr Fischer**—I stand corrected. This is the second thing, just quickly, I would bring up which may bear some relevance: both Barbara Winter in her book and Detmers in his books state, 'The *Kormoran* was operating considerably closer to shore than usual.' Detmers has also stated in his book that at that time he was intending to mine Carnarvon. If it is taken that his top economical cruising speed was probably around 10 knots, if he was where he said he was and was going to mine Carnarvon on that particular night, as he

said he would, the distance involved means that he would not have got there in enough time in darkness to mine Carnarvon and get clear again. So that is just something that needs to be thought about as well.

**ACTING CHAIR**—If you could put those comments in a written submission to the committee, it would be appreciated.

**Mr Fischer**—I will be submitting them to the subcommittee in writing.

**ACTING CHAIR**—Thank you very much.

**Mr Evans**—My name is Noddy Evans and I am from Mount Lawley. I am an old age pensioner and fairly illiterate but determined. First of all, on these Japanese submarines, on the surface they can only do 10 knots; underwater they can only do four. So they had no hope of getting anywhere near either the *Sydney* or the *Kormoran*. All the submarine movements are in the evidence issued by the Japanese Admiral—somebody ‘Moto’—which I have just passed over, and they are linked with the Japanese-Chinese war. The Japanese were retreating from China at the time, but because of their low speed none of them could have ever got anywhere near HMAS *Sydney*. The *Kormoran* did have underwater torpedo tubes up near the prow. If that is raised, you will find that is true. I challenge anyone to deny that it is not.

Everyone seems to be harping about this closeness thing. I think they have forgotten one small point, and the small point is this: when the two ships first met, they passed each other like so—like on a major road. If the *Kormoran* could do, as is alleged, 32 knots, there was nothing stopping it from continuing on and then suddenly turning around and coming up the backside—pardon my language—of the HMAS *Sydney* and firing its underwater torpedoes in an attempt to slow the *Sydney* down. The closeness comes in is, because the *Sydney* was continuing in a sort of straight line because of possibly damaged rudders, there was nothing stopping the *Kormoran* doing television twists, if you like, of coming up the side of the *Sydney* and then trying to belt hell out of the sides of the *Sydney* or anywhere else. I think I had better make that clear: if the *Sydney*’s stern—or its backside—was damaged, then the manoeuvrability of HMAS *Sydney* would have been very minimal or hardly at all. So the *Kormoran* could have come up the side, quite easily.

The other question is that of the missing men. For some unknown reason, no-one seems to have mentioned this. We are talking about destroyed evidence, destroyed documents and everything else, and it seems strange that when I did correspondence with the Chagos Islands their documents were also destroyed, which means just one thing: that after the battle between these two ships the disabled *Sydney* went westward, not south-eastwards, as Detmers said; otherwise it would have taken them to Geraldton. It went westward because that was the way they were both travelling when the confrontation was on. The *Sydney* might have been disabled, but even a cruiser can be blown around in very



strong winds, and you have your trade winds and all that caper. The *Sydney* went westward towards the Chagos Islands.

As for the crew, from what I could get from the Chagos Islands, a lot of them were taken off the *Sydney* and taken towards Madras: to Madras, in fact. They went through special training and then they went on three missions authorised by SEAC. The three missions failed and all the crew were killed—on land, not at sea. In other words, a seaman can know his way around at sea but if you put him ashore in a jungle then he is lost. This is where the Japanese had the advantage.

**ACTING CHAIR**—Thank you very much. Could we have the next witness, please.

**Mr Keightley**—If I last another three weeks, I will be 85 years old.

**ACTING CHAIR**—I am sure you will.

**Mr Keightley**—Thank you. I want to talk about articles in the *West Australian* which said that the *Sydney* was returning from Sunda Strait. The next week it said that the *Sydney* was returning from convoy duties. Both of those statements are rubbish because I happen to know. I was in charge of the ammunition in Fremantle for about three years and I was in the DEMS—Defensively Equipped Merchant Ships. I had to board every merchant ship that came into Fremantle.

The *Sydney* left Fremantle and she was gone two days later. I know that for a fact. I thought there may be some raised eyebrows here, so I thought there is an old CPO and I think he is still alive. I looked him up in the phone book and I found him. He is 97 and his name is CPO Choules. I did not mention any time span, but I said, ‘Claude, when the *Sydney* left Fremantle, what was the time span until she was lost?’ He said, ‘Let me think. She left Fremantle, headed north and it was two or maybe three days, I am not sure.’ I said, ‘That’s okay. That’s all I want to know.’

I had spent all night loading *Sydney* up with six-inch shells, four-inch shells and depth charges. If I spent all night loading her up, and I was told two days later that she was gone, it would not slip my memory, would it? I was playing tennis at Kings Park and they yelled out from the phone and said that the navy wanted me. I left the tennis and it was Lieutenant Commander Hatton on the phone. ‘Ken,’ he said, ‘have we got six-inch shells?’ and he gave me the descriptions. I said ‘Yes, sir.’ He said, ‘Good. The *Sydney* is on the other side of Rottneet. Grab a taxi and come straight down.’ Away I went. I rang the army, ordered the necessary vehicles and then worked all night loading the *Sydney* up with what she wanted.

About 8 o’clock the next morning the gunnery officer came up to me. I do not know his name, but he is one of the nicest blokes I have ever seen. He shook me by the

hand and said, 'Thank you. A job well done.' And he said, sotto voce, 'See you in a couple of weeks.' Well, you know what happened after that. The two CPOs, with whom I was working, went up north to where the Germans came ashore and when they came back they told me what the Germans had said: how the *Sydney* came in to within 400 yards; the Germans fired an eight-inch gun, they said—I do not know whether that is right or wrong, but that is what I was told—and their first shot knocked the bridge and the superstructure over the side. As the six-inch guns were out of action, the *Sydney* sailors ran to the four-inch guns and, firing over open sights, sank the *Kormoran*. Time is short. Have you heard enough?

**ACTING CHAIR**—What have you got?

**Mr Keightley**—I have tried to reconstruct the crime about 1,000 times. All I can think of is that if this had been 1,000 miles out in the ocean it would not have happened. But the *Sydney* just left Fremantle two days before, it was in home waters, the cargo ship was flying the Dutch flag—she got caught. We know her magazine was chock-a-block. If she was going away for two weeks, her oil tanks would be chock-a-block. If she was on fire on the horizon, as somebody said, fore and aft, it is not very difficult to imagine what happened next—one mighty explosion. She would have been blown to smithereens. People say, 'Why is there no debris?' With the oil tanks chock-a-block, the sea all round the *Sydney* would be a mass of flames—everything would be incinerated. Anything that was not incinerated would be heading for East Africa, because in November, up there, the east wind blows hard just about every day.

You may remember a report in the paper that a small speedboat broke its moorings—I am not quite sure of the times: six months or maybe a year afterwards—and it ended up onshore in East Africa. If the *Sydney* was on fire on the horizon, she would be on the western horizon. Normally, if a ship is in strife in its home waters, it would head for shore, wouldn't it, not the horizon? But the *Sydney* must have been going west, because if it had been going the other way people onshore would have heard the explosion.

**ACTING CHAIR**—Thank you very much indeed. And good luck for your birthday.

**Mr Keightley**—If I last.

**ACTING CHAIR**—You will be right. Who's next?

**Mr Fletcher**—I am a chartered professional engineer. As a boy of 12 or 13 I attended Perth Boys School during the lunch hour and inspected *Kormoran*'s life boat. Something was wrong when I looked at it. I did not put my finger on it until yesterday when the retired admiral said that there was a fierce and close-fought encounter. That lifeboat had no damage, no shrapnel, no sign of fire. There was nothing. That is what

woke me up to thinking that he is wrong. In support of my opinion on that, if the fierce fighting had taken place—and that is what a naval officer would like to think—the mound of mines on the stern of the *Kormoran* would have gone off and the equipment would have been damaged. One of the reports says that a ship picked up three carley floats from the *Kormoran* that were still floating. They destroyed them so that they did not confuse them in the search for the *Sydney*. Another thing is that the carley floats and the lifeboats would have all been damaged if it had blown up. The men got ashore and there were no shrapnel or gunshot wounds on them. It does not gel—except that in naval terms they would like to think that it was a good clean fight. But I think that it was not and that there is some reason the *Sydney* came in alongside thinking it was safe to do so. Even though she was prepared for anything she got caught. That is all I have to say. The evidence in my mind does not indicate a fierce fight.

**Mr Anderson**—For 12 years I was a RAN signalman, ending up as acting yeoman of signals, mainly on the *Australia* in the Indian and Atlantic Oceans in 1940-41. From the time I first heard information about the loss of the *Sydney* my concern has been the professionalism of the captains—notably in this case Burnett and the professionalism of his compatriots, Collins, Waller and Farncomb. These are people whom I had contact with or knew by repute. Captain Oldham was my last captain in 1950 before I retired. It worries me greatly that their professionalism has been questioned, in particular that the professionalism of Burnett has been questioned over this length of time.

There is a second captain who has not figured in this inquiry so far, not to my knowledge anyhow. That is Captain Gibbons on the *Aquitania*. I am interested to find out whether the *Aquitania* flew the blue ensign or the red ensign. This is quite a substantial point because if it was a blue ensign it was a royal fleet auxiliary, which means that part of that crew were naval reservists, including the officers. It is a point that has relevance when it comes to the breaking of radio silence—that has never washed with me.

In my submission I have mentioned that the first indication of the loss of the *Sydney* came to me, as I recall, either on Friday 21 November or on the Monday. I am uncertain of that. But it is significant that that information was about. I was in Victoria standing by a corvette at that time and it was quite common knowledge in the communications area.

When it comes to looking for archival material, there are the CAFOs and CCNOs that should be available that could give leading information, either in the months before or the short months afterwards. As I recall it, when it comes to challenge and identification recognition at sea, in my experience—

**ACTING CHAIR**—Sorry to interrupt you, but are you saying that the CCNOs and CAFOs are in relation to the signal recognition?

**Mr Anderson**—Yes, or what the Admiralty or Navy Board said relative to the

*Sydney*'s procedures after she was lost or controlling the arrest of suspected raiders. From my own memory, when it comes to challenge and identification, one of the first things that came up was first-sighting reports of the suspicious vessels, enemy or otherwise. I have a very great recollection of this in our experience off the West African coast with the Dakar business. With the mandatory controls for controlling the warships approach to anything suspicious and going to action stations—being in the first state of readiness for action—I find it very difficult to accept what has been generally put forward as the official account of *Sydney* coming in close to the *Kormoran*. This must have been a ruse. It could have been a direction from elsewhere higher up to follow this procedure.

With the *Straat Malakka* identity check and the whereabouts of that ship, you had naval shipping intelligence that would have been available to the captain of shipping around the Australian coast at the time. In connection with the first-sighting report, if Burnett had wanted to follow through on that identification, why wasn't this forthcoming straightaway? That ties back into the *Harman* case and what went on there under Mason and the other—

**ACTING CHAIR**—In Australia, would you have sent the *Walrus* off as the first step?

**Mr Anderson**—That is the case. This happened when we were looking for the *Admiral Scheer* off the West African coast.

**ACTING CHAIR**—But, in terms of Australia's experience, you would not have come in close unless there was some sort of tactical ruse involved?

**Mr Anderson**—Yes, that is right. The *Walrus* would have been used for a first check well away from the ship. The other thing with the tactical ruse was that the *Kormoran*'s captain mentioned QQQ whereas in the control at the time that had been superseded by QQQQ—four Qs. That should have given some indication to Burnett, if he was listening in, or to the shore stations that there was something funny out there. That is another reason for him being at full action stations.

**ACTING CHAIR**—Or at least at cruising stations.

**Mr Anderson**—I think it would be more than cruising stations.

**ACTING CHAIR**—There seems to be a lot of evidence that people were hanging around, which is not consistent with full action stations. But, anyway, go on.

**Mr Anderson**—Also, when it comes to ruses, there is something that Gill has not mentioned in his official history two explicit occasions I was involved in. One was the Bear Island expedition with the *Australia* and the *Norfolk* in August 1940 when we were to get into the German fishing fleet. There were supposed to be 24 vessels up there and

the whole idea was that the two cruisers were to knock them off, put boarding parties on six of them and come back towards Lerwick. We spent the time going up there making USSR flags to put on those vessels which were captured. Why was that? It could have been an irritant or an upset between Germany and the USSR at that time, and Britain in August 1940 had her back well and truly to the wall.

The other one that I am mentioning in this regard is the convoy US 10 in March 1941 when we came back from Colombo to Fremantle with the *New Holland* or the *New Amsterdam* and the *Mauretania*. The *Australia* escorted these until we met up with the *Canberra* and the cruiser *Hobart* or *Sydney*—I cannot remember which—off the west coast. The unusual thing about this is that with the night cruising stations you had the *Mauretania* and the *New Amsterdam* line ahead and the cruisers one ahead in arrowhead formation. As soon as dawn came and dawn action stations, the two side cruisers moved out to 10 miles either side of the central cruiser and the two merchant ships moved out 10 miles on either side. So you had a sweep right down there and it was an invitation for the raider. Mainly what they were looking for was the *Admiral Scheer*. If he had spotted one of these big troopers out there coming into attack it, there were three cruisers set off on the other side of it. It was a tactic. My purpose for bringing that up is that it is not mentioned in the Australian official history.

I was involved quite a deal with cryptography. At that stage, until America came into the war and until more or less 1943, most of the naval code ciphers were in four group numeral, and encoding or decoding time pads were for one day or certain periods. Then it was superseded by the machine codes.

**ACTING CHAIR**—Yes, Glenys McDonald told us that.

**Mr Anderson**—In our days it was the TYPEX and the CCM. The other thing is the radio transmission. What was the degree of reliability of the ionospheric prediction service at that period, if it was in existence? My experience was that, when the *Australia* went south to Heard Island in July-August 1950, there was a period of 24 to 36 hours I think when she could not be contacted. We were transmitting, but it was just flying off into space, and there was quite a deal of worry about what had happened to it. Eventually, the signals were picked up from Esquimalt in Canada. With radio communications at that stage, that may be some explanation as to why he did not get them.

Mr Ryding mentioned yesterday *Sydney*'s wooden decking and cordicene as fire materials. The first thing that happened in Australia, when we were overseas at Liverpool in 1940, was that they ripped out the cordicene and the wooden decking, purely for added fire protection.

**ACTING CHAIR**—There is a lot of evidence that *Sydney* was as is, so it might have happened in Australia but I think, in *Sydney*'s case, there is a lot of evidence to suggest that she was untouched.

**Mr Anderson**—The other thing that was brought up was that *Australia* was the first Australian cruiser that was equipped with RDF, and that was in Liverpool in 1940. I do not think *Sydney* was.

**ACTING CHAIR**—Could you speed it up? I am sorry to hurry you, but we have a number of people waiting and we are going to run out of time.

**Mr Anderson**—My plea to you is that, in dealing with this inquiry, there was a neglect of duty of care on the part of the post-war Australian governments in accounting to the Australian people.

**ACTING CHAIR**—Thank you. Could we have the next witness, please.

**Mr Tom Fisher**—I served on HMAS *Sydney* from March 1940 until 26 October 1941.

**ACTING CHAIR**—Your name was mentioned in evidence yesterday.

**Mr Tom Fisher**—My main reason for coming up here is that I want to put in a plug for the captain. A couple of weeks ago, there was a notice in the *West Australian* that really denigrated Captain Burnett. I served with Captain Burnett on the bridge. I was an able seaman but I was a phone number. I was a phone number for leaving harbour and entering harbour, for streaming paravanes and recovering paravanes. I always found Captain Burnett—to use a cliché—very cool, calm and collected. He was a very efficient officer. In the lower deck I was a torpedo party—

**ACTING CHAIR**—You served with him from when until when?

**Mr Tom Fisher**—I served with him from when he joined the ship in about May 1941 until 26 October. The senior men on board the ship had the highest regard for him, and it really hurt to see the denigration in the paper a couple of weeks ago.

Secondly—and I may be wrong in saying this—there is a lot of talk about what Captain Burnett did do and what he should not have done. But was he really on the bridge at that time? Was he sick in his cabin? In the Mediterranean in 1940, Captain Collins got pneumonia. He was confined to his cabin in the daytime, and at night-time they brought a camp stretcher up on the bridge for him to sleep there under cover, and they had a bit of canvas over him to keep the dampness off. All we hear about is ‘Captain Burnett did this,’ but was he really on the bridge? Was he sick? There is no evidence, and that is something I have tried to plug for a long while. Thirdly, and I will not hold you up on this one—

**ACTING CHAIR**—The buck stops with the commander, irrespective of whether he was in his cabin or whether he was on the bridge. I regret to say it, but the buck stops there.

**Mr Tom Fisher**—There is a lot of talk about A turret being out of action. I was a torpedoman and, in those days, torpedomen were the ship's electricians. I remember very clearly going up to A turret during our last trip north—that was the trip before the ship was sunk—to repair a phone up there. In Australian waters, the turret crews were allowed outside the turret and they were sitting on the broom lockers outside, except for the phone numbers, and the phone was playing up.

The reason I remember that is that Petty Officer Curtis, a well-known character throughout the navy, was telling us that he hoped to get a draft to England to the Channel to the motor torpedo boats. The reason that stuck in my mind and has stuck in my mind until this day is that, two months later, when I joined the *Hobart* in the Mediterranean and I heard the *Sydney* was sunk, I wondered if Dick Curtis ever got his draft off it, or whether he went down with the ship. That is the reason it has stuck in my mind. I rest my case.

**ACTING CHAIR**—Thank you very much. We are delighted to see you here today, which is unfortunately not the case with 645 others. Could we have the next witness, please.

**Mr Ross**—I am here in a private capacity. My interest is due to my late father who was the longest serving officer on *Sydney*. He was transferred just prior to her last voyage.

I have put in a submission and the main thrust of that submission relates to the carley float, and I did briefly mention the gun control systems. I will just digress for a moment. My late father served under all the captains of the *Sydney*, having been on board since her commissioning, and he had the highest regard for Captains Fitzgerald, Waller, Collins and Burnett. I say that to add to what Tommy said when he said that he was an extremely competent officer. My father was the captain's secretary, so I think he was in a fair position to know.

I do not profess to know any answers as to how *Sydney* was sunk. Whatever happened in the action is probably unlikely to ever be known. However, I think it is plausible that *Kormoran* could have defeated *Sydney* in a fair fight. I base this on a report from Captain J. Waller on 21 October 1938 when he sent an urgent but secret communication to the navy office after conducting gunnery trials off the coast, stating that he was absolutely appalled at the extreme vulnerability of the gun control systems. He said that the primary control of main armament and high-angle fire was extremely vulnerable and that the first and second alternatives, which were back-up systems for the main armament, were seriously inefficient and that group control was unworkable due to noise, because group control or local control means using telephones and anybody who has served on a six-inch cruiser would know that you cannot hear anything.

Captain Waller was extremely uncomfortable knowing that, with the imminence of

war, if he had to close on an enemy ship during an action there was a possibility that if the control circuits were damaged he would be severely disadvantaged. In this memo that he sent to the naval office, Rear Admiral W. Custance said it was extremely urgent to provide adequate protection for these gun control systems and to install an aft director tower as well. He was also concerned about the sister ships, *Hobart* and *Perth*, because they were built by the same people.

The report and recommendations were then forwarded to the Assistant Chief of Naval Staff, Captain John Collins, who later at the outbreak of war became the captain. He recommended that estimates for these rectifications be prepared after seeking advice from the Admiralty but, due to the times, when a lot of people did not believe that Australia would be imminently in a war, nothing really ended up being done.

Captain Collins assumed command of the *Sydney* on 16 November 1939 and the post of Assistant Chief of Naval Staff previously held by Captain Collins went to Captain J. Burnett. Ironically, the file on *Sydney's* vulnerable gunnery control circuits was read by Captain Burnett on 4 December. He noted that the Admiralty had not replied to correspondence and the naval board was still waiting for advice. He initialled the file. Three years later, nothing had been done. Ironically, the last time the file was seen was on 17 November 1941. It was duly initialled and pigeonholed again.

As I say, I do not profess to know how or why the *Sydney* was sunk or whether the *Sydney* came in dangerously close or anything else. I have no idea. I am just saying that possibly the grave concerns of Captain Waller, Rear Admiral Custance, and Captain Collins may be well-founded. There are five copies of this for you.

**ACTING CHAIR**—That is the letter from Mr John Ross dated the 15th.

**Mr Lamb**—I am ex-RAN. I would like to make a couple of points which may be of interest to the committee. First of all I would like to mention that I have never met a dumb four-ring skipper.

The Japanese position: I wrote to the defence department in Japan in 1980 when I was doing a doctorate at Murdoch. Professor McGaw, who was the head of psychometrics there, had a Japanese secretary who put it into Japanese for me. We wrote to the defence department and asked them where all their I-class seagoing submarines were. They told us that three were in dry dock, two were at sea either coming home or going somewhere and three were around Hawaii and that there were none near the west coast of Western Australia. I can only take their word for it. It was all in Japanese and I had to get it translated. I just trusted that.

The next thing that was interesting when I was studying the situation was the report from the doctor at Swanbourne who was responsible for the care of the officers on board the *Kormoran*. His major action was to fix a shrapnel tear and remove the shrapnel



from the buttocks of Detmers. It was the only major wound he had to deal with. The Germans themselves admit that only 20 people of the 400 were killed in action; the other 58 were drowned at a later event. So that lends force to an unequal sort of action. Messerschmitt also said something interesting: he said that the ship was very close, that the sun was shining on the *Sydney*—so they must have been to the west of it—and that it was facing north and south. That was a thing that I could not work out from the way they talked about the action. Messerschmitt said, and it is reinforced in the report by the doctor, that the *Sydney* stopped them. The doctor reinforced it by saying, ‘Stopped? The *Kormoran* was stopped?’ He said, ‘Yes, we were actually stopped and stationary.’ The interesting thing is that you could not fire the underwater torpedoes unless the vessel was stopped. So that lends force to it. I am wondering whether the torpedo was fired before anyone changed any flags.

There is another interesting thing. Detmers was a brilliant and aggressive skipper and a brilliant seaman. There was quite a strong wind at the time. He may have sighted the *Sydney* early, in other words, when it was still light. He had 400 mines on board according to the reports—each of those mines had something like 800 pounds of torpex, or whatever the Germans call it. He was told not to go into action against a man-o’-war; he had to run. He knew he could not outrun it. He was a brilliant tactician; why not throw the mines overboard knowing that the Western Australian current at half a knot would put them in a certain range over the next hour and a half. He could then have attracted the *Sydney* to enter into that area. That might explain why the *Sydney* was sitting there like a dead duck—it ran into the mines. You could get rid of the anchors and they would float. The interesting thing about that is that there is an argument that Detmers stayed two days later on the site—and he was concerned about piracy and his crew being hung as pirates because he had to go ashore to a foreign country and surrender. He may have stayed back to destroy the floating mines.

Being a teacher of physics and a gunnery electrician—I was in charge of gunnery computers and things—I was very interested in the fall of shot. According to me, it was very difficult for the fall of shot to be long if they were as close as the Germans reckoned, because it is a parabola, and you can work out the time of flight and the maximum height of a parabola. Its maximum height in that short range could not have been far above the aiming point, which was the point abaft the foremast, about the level of the transmission station—and a lot of the sailors say that you aim at the waterline—and, if it were only 200 yards too long, it would have hit the superstructure. I question that. Do not forget that if your ship rolls it is still a parabola.

**ACTING CHAIR**—Thank you very much. That was very helpful.

**Mr Peet**—I am a professional historian doing a master’s thesis on the air war in Western Australia in World War II. In 1995, for Australia Remembers, I prepared an outline history of the armed forces in Western Australia in World War II—both sides, Allies and Axis—and here are some copies. The second point is that I examined a primary

source that I do not think anyone else has examined and that is the RAAF Central War Room Diary. Here are some extracts I typed up last night from the notes I made five years ago.

Resolved (on motion by Mr Dondas):

That Mr Peet's minute of 16 April be accepted as evidence.

**Mr Peet**—I also matched the times to the SWACH log. It is just a short summary, but it does indicate that on Saturday, 22 November Area Combined Headquarters in Fremantle told RAAF *Pearce* to commence a search, the object being to locate HMAS *Sydney*—not necessarily that there was anything wrong but they just wanted to know where it was. That search area was north-west of Rottnest Island.

**ACTING CHAIR**—Group Captain Bourne spoke about this one. Zulu 6 23 11 indicates that the search was to start on the 23rd, doesn't it?

**Mr Peet**—I do not know the full interpretation of that Central War Room Diary.

**ACTING CHAIR**—You might like to provide a copy of that in due course to the group captain. We would be interested in your reaction to the signal extract.

**Mr Peet**—He has it. My third point is that, in the American secondary literature, particularly in John Costello's 1994 book on Pearl Harbour, there is a very lengthy footnote on *Sydney* and a number of Navy board investigations. I have also found something in David Kahn's book—also an American author—and I will forward copies of these to the committee in due course.

**ACTING CHAIR**—Thank you very much. That one is particularly interesting, and I am not going to call Group Captain Bourne this afternoon because we are not going to have time—unless we do have a few minutes—but could we have something from you on that? I do not want it now, but could you give us something in writing in relation to that please?

**Group Capt. Bourne**—I will do.

**Mr Hillier**—I am an interested party from City Beach. I suppose if we look at the Greeks, when they had a tragedy which they could not explain, they got this *deus ex machina* which used to plunge down and try to explain things. I suppose in the Australian tragedy our machine is in fact the Japanese submarine. I just cannot believe that we are accepting this.

The Japanese main fleet—six carriers, two battleships and a number of cruisers—left their home port on 10 November and headed up into their northern islands to lose

themselves. They left their codes and their secret call signs behind so that people would still think that was where they were; and we are being asked to believe that, for the cost of one paltry modified leander, they were going to risk the strike on Pearl Harbour. That cannot be believed.

The second point I would like to make goes back to a happening which occurred to a particular neutral ship called the *Nikkosan*. This took place in 1915. The *Nikkosan* was about to be boarded by a crew—from a submarine in fact—which were going to destroy it, open up its kingstons and blow the bottom out of it. The submarine was alongside a ship carrying an American flag, in fact it not only carried two American flags, but it had two huge boards 16 feet long, 12 feet wide, with *Ulysses S. Grant* clearly marked on it.

As it passed between the submarine and the ship they seem to have dropped most of their flags and got rid of at least one of their boards—with the other they had a problem apparently. Some of the crewmen did not behave as they should have. As it came around the bow of this particular ship it opened fire and, in fact, flattened the submarine. Quite a few of the crew were blown over. The people on this particular ship, that turned out to be a Q ship, proceeded then to shoot the sailors in the water. Some of them managed to get to the *Nikkosan* and started climbing up the ropes. They too were shot. Five of them got aboard and, in fact, the marines were put aboard and hunted those guys down. They too, were shot—there were no survivors. The instructions had come from the captain. He has two names, one is Herbert and one is McBride, depending on whether he is wearing his RN hat or Q hat. What could we say about him? I looked for a description, I could not really work out what he had. But then I heard yesterday he could be best described as a razor-sharp fighting seaman. And that was a pretty good description of this guy who was an RN captain.

The ship, obviously a submarine, was the *U27*. It had gone down. That took place in 1915. The story appeared in a huge number of places, it was a cause celebre. If you look at the German newspapers at the time, you will find the propaganda. They were very keen to whip things up. I cannot help believing that someone like Detmers, who would have been a lad of 15 at this time, would not have been aware of this. While I do not say that this is the way of his behaviour, these are the sorts of things that can happen at sea. Thank you.

**ACTING CHAIR**—Thank you very much.

**Dr Pridmore**—I am here as an employee of World Geoscience Corporation and as a private citizen. World Geoscience has been involved in airborne magnetic searches—

**ACTING CHAIR**—We have met before.

**Dr Pridmore**—Yes, I remember. That is correct. It is almost 10 years now. I

developed a personal interest in the search for the *Sydney* and I want to make three points here this morning. The first is to tell you briefly about the laser technology referred to by Dr John Penrose yesterday. That laser technology was developed here in Perth after a prototype was developed by British Petroleum. It is routinely used in the search for oil over ocean depths, from 100 metres through to kilometres. We have done some experimental tests over *HMAS Derwent*, which lies to the south-west of Rottnest. It is a scuttled Australian warship. Unfortunately it is only at a depth of about 100 metres, but the initial results of that test look very promising.

The second point I would like to make is in relation to the future of *Sydney* studies. If the Australian parliament is to give the search for the *Sydney* its imprimatur, I suggest that it needs to consider a properly constituted authority which will carry out that search. My recommendation is that the *Sydney* foundation is the best authority to undertake this work, subject to certain provisos—

**ACTING CHAIR**—A trust.

**Dr Pridmore**—Yes.

**ACTING CHAIR**—Quite.

**Dr Pridmore**—The third point I would like to make concerns the memorial to the men and boys on the *Sydney*. I would like to suggest that some money be set aside for a scholarship to allow young Australians to study those areas of technology or activity that the *Sydney* disaster has highlighted as being deficient. Some examples that have come up from the hearing today include survival in the water, decoding of signals and possibly—along the lines of Kim Kirsner's work—the interpretation of oral history. I believe that something like an ongoing scholarship would be a suitable memorial.

**ACTING CHAIR**—Thank you very much.

**Mr Baxter**—I suggest that the board look at a national and international advertising campaign to seek persons who hold artefacts, correspondence with the Department of Defence, depositions, diaries, diagrams, documents, films, flotsam and jetsam, letters, logs, uncompleted or unpublished manuscripts, maps, medical records, dental records, oral records, pay books, personal papers, photographs, signals, souvenirs, sworn statements, et cetera. Further, I suggest that a permanent amnesty be declared to allow private citizens, service personnel, public or federal servants to submit such material free of persecution or prosecution and that such material be collected and collated to further the search for the truth.

**ACTING CHAIR**—Thank you very much.

**Mr Poprzeczny**—I have written probably close to 100 press articles on the *Sydney*.

I only want to make two points today, and the first point is on the question of a memorial. I have only seen one naval memorial in my life. It is on Pennsylvania Avenue in Washington DC, and it is an extremely moving memorial opposite the national archives. It is a physical memorial, not a scholarship or anything of that nature.

The committee clearly has to make a decision on the body on Christmas Island. I feel it also has to make a decision on the location of *Sydney*; whether it is off Useless Loop, that the Foundation Trust is convinced of, or off Port Gregory. I would urge the committee recommend erection of a tripartite style memorial, with Fremantle being the first place because this was the last point at which 645 Australians stood on Australian soil. If the decision is made that the body buried on Christmas Island was an RAN seaman, I believe that the second memorial should be Christmas Island. If it is decided that the wreck is off Quobba or Port Gregory, the third one should be at one of these locations. It would be a triangular arrangement, and these should be artistically done, even though they are many hundreds, even thousands, of kilometres apart.

I hope to take only one minute on my second point. I have conducted research in German archives. I do not speak German, but in this case that is an asset to make my point. I have been working for over a decade, with my wife, on the long-term demographic plans of Hitler and Himmler in Eastern Europe; that is, the resettlement of many tens of millions of Slavs to western Siberia. It is based on planned population transfers that were carried out in eastern Poland in 1942-43 by the head of Aktion Reinhard, a Slovenian called Odilo Globocnik, an SS man.

This led me to go to four German archives. I must stress that I do not speak German and I do not read German for, as Mark Twain said, it takes a week to learn English, a fortnight to learn French and three life times to learn German. It is not something that I could embark upon. However, in the Koblenz Bundesarchiv—the national archive—the military archives in Freiburg, the war criminal archives in Ludwigsburg and a private historical institute of contemporary history in Munich, I found the German archivists to be extremely professional and extremely helpful at all times, and any suggestion to the contrary is, I feel, quite an unfair statement. Thank you very much.

**ACTING CHAIR**—Thank you very much. I am reluctant to say that I will leave the best to last, but take it as you want it.

**Lt Cmdr McDonald**—My name is Ean McDonald and, in a couple of months, I will be 80. I would like to clarify a few points that I think have been raised by the committee as much as by anyone else. The first one is that there are a lot of questions on how the *Kormoran* crew would have been instructed—as we presume they were—on what happened and what story they were to tell. I believe that they had some four or five hours consequent to the action—until the ship actually sunk and until they therefore abandoned. During that time, I think Captain Detmers—a clever man, as we know he was, and a clear thinker—would have come to a decision as to what the story should basically be and would have instructed his crew accordingly.

It is not difficult aboard a ship like that—or any warship—to simply pipe ‘Clear lower deck, everybody to’ what not. In the navy it is almost usually ‘Everybody aft’. However, in *Kormoran*, it could have well been ‘Everybody into a saloon’ or something. He would have been easily able to assemble his crew and give them the story and, because they were and have been until recently, I think, subject to war crimes, I think that would be a very good reason why they would have stuck to it all these years. The suggestion has been made that, if we free them up to speak, they may well come out and tell us what the real truth is.

I think Group Captain Bourne got a little confused yesterday. Perhaps, if I may, I will try to assist him on that question I think you asked as to what the RSL thought. I think that he would confirm that what he was saying was that that was a motion that he had put forward to the RSL, not necessarily what the RSL was thinking.

Why hasn’t this inquiry been held before? That is a good question because it wasn’t really initiated by the politicians Filing and Smith at all. They simply carried on with something that a lot of us had been urging for many years and always getting the answer, ‘The official story has stood the test of time; we don’t need to.’

As to the question of surrender by *Kormoran*, there are a number of references to that. Interestingly, I had a reference from an Italian internee—a settler in Australia—in Harvey Camp with the Germans and they told him that they had opened fire under a white flag. That adds up to other evidence given. As to the Q signal—the three Qs—which was an interesting point that was raised this morning, I believe that the three Q signal with the top left hand corner of the latitude-longitude rectangle was the signal of *Kormoran* to her headquarters in Germany saying, ‘I’m in trouble in this area.’

*Kormoran* is supposed to have said to *Sydney* that she was heading for Batavia. From the action point, when looking at a compass, Batavia was over here but *Kormoran* was heading over there. I do not think *Sydney* would have believed that. Burnett would have been well and truly warned by that point if nothing else. In any case, no unknown ship of *Kormoran*’s size would have been heading that way, which was towards Darwin. Also, because of the situation reports that came out twice daily which told us where all known ships were at all times—and *Straat Malakka* would have been known—she would have been designated as moving from Fremantle to Darwin and in a position approximately so and so. So there was immediately a cue to Burnett that there was something wrong.

I believe that *Sydney* would have began signalling by lamp a long way out. The two ships would have seen each other initially, at bridge to bridge, at about 20 miles. *Sydney* would take quite a while to get in with the speed difference. Reg Hardstaff has picked that up. Therefore *Sydney* had plenty of time to signal by lamp. Every merchant sailor of any consequence was able to read and send morse. In confirmation of that I asked Captain Swanston, who is sitting up the back, whether he still reads morse. Yes, he

does. That indicates that even in this electronic age the merchant officer still reads and sends morse. So there was no reason for that lamp signalling not to have been done.

**ACTING CHAIR**—Did *Sydney* have 20-inch lamps?

**Lt Cmdr McDonald**—No, 10-inch signal lamps. She also had search lights that she could use.

**A member of the audience**—Sometimes they used the big incandescent 18-inch lamps for signalling.

**Lt Cmdr McDonald**—Yes, they could be as big as 18 inches. I should have remembered; I was a signalman aboard. I thought they were 10 inches. It shows what memory does.

I have a comment on the routine on a warship. I have mentioned in my submission before your audience that the warship would certainly have come in. There would be a routine system of checking out the ship before she came in. A cutter of armed men would be put down and left in the water. They would not have to row to the ship; they would be left. The opposing ship would be told to come in and pick up the cutter so they could check it out in all detail. If the merchant ship did not do that then the warship had an invitation, as it were, to open fire. If they did come in and knock off the cutter you lost the cutter's crew, but you did not lose your warship. There was a distinct routine. I have detailed it further, but in essence that is it.

I believe the gunnery of *Kormoran* was mentioned this morning by a gunner. The wind was about force 3; that is about 10 knots. I believe *Kormoran* would not have rolled significantly in a 10-knot breeze. I put in my submission that if the two ships were that close in action it would be rather like dropping a golf ball in a bucket at a metre distance. If the gunnery on *Sydney* was as bad as John Ross's son has mentioned today, how did she manage to sink *Colleoni*?

**A member of the audience**—There was the prospect of hitting the circuits.

**Lt Cmdr McDonald**—I see.

**ACTING CHAIR**—Would you agree that there was a basic problem with the direction of X and Y?

**Lt Cmdr McDonald**—I do not know. I have heard that the cables were bare along the decks somewhere. I cannot comment on that. The direction, certainly, has to go through to all turrets but they can go into local control very quickly.

**ACTING CHAIR**—Thank you. For the subcommittee's part this has been a very illuminating experience. We are dealing with a national tragedy. It is not something that

the parliament of Australia will take lightly, I can assure you. We thank you all for your participation. Parliamentary hearings generally go as well as the audience will allow, so I thank you on behalf of the subcommittee for your participation. I would have liked a little longer in this open forum but, regrettably, we cannot do that. I hope we will come up with something that will eventually lead to some substantive action from the parliament and the government.

Resolved:

That this subcommittee authorises publication of the evidence given before it at public hearing this day.

**Subcommittee adjourned at 12.10 p.m.**