



COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA

# JOINT STANDING COMMITTEE

ON

FOREIGN AFFAIRS, DEFENCE AND TRADE

(Defence Subcommittee)

Reference: Circumstances of the sinking of HMAS *Sydney*

MELBOURNE

Friday, 1 May 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
	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**

<b>BYE, Dr John Arthur Tristram, Reader in Oceanography, School of Earth Sciences, Flinders University, GPO Box 2100, South Australia 5001 . . . . .</b>	<b>363</b>
<b>COLLINS, Mr John James, 16 Swayfield Road, Mt Waverley, Victoria 3149 . . . . .</b>	<b>348</b>
<b>.....</b>	<b>385</b>
<b>CRAILL, Mrs Barbara Joan, 7 Graham Avenue, Hackham, South Australia 5163 . . . . .</b>	<b>341</b>
<b>HEWITT, Mr Winston Frederick, Unit 6, 93 Glenhuntly Road, Elwood, Victoria 3184 . . . . .</b>	<b>386</b>
<b>KNIGHT, Mr Lindsay Charles, 677 Lyne Street, Lavington, New South Wales 2641 . . . . .</b>	<b>388</b>
<b>LOUREY, Mr Kevin, 11 Wilson Street, Surrey Hills, Victoria 3127 . . . . .</b>	<b>356</b>
<b>.....</b>	<b>384</b>
<b>McGOWAN, Mr Edward, 71 Quinns Parade, Mt Eliza, Victoria 3930 . . . . .</b>	<b>329</b>
<b>PAGE, Mrs Rosslyn Ann, 24 Leabrook Drive, Rostrevor, South Australia 5073 . . . . .</b>	<b>363</b>
<b>RANSON, Associate Professor, David Leo, Deputy Director, Victorian Institute of Forensic Medicine, 57-83 Kavanagh Street, Southbank, Victoria 3006 . . . . .</b>	<b>319</b>
<b>TAYLER, Lieutenant Commander Clive Ernest, 23 Finlay Street, Albert Park, Victoria 3206 . . . . .</b>	<b>381</b>

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

*Circumstances of the sinking of HMAS Sydney*

MELBOURNE

Friday, 1 May 1998

Present

Senator MacGibbon (Chairman)

Senator Sandy Macdonald                      Mr Price

Senator Margetts

Subcommittee met at 9.39 a.m.

Senator MacGibbon took the chair.

**CHAIRMAN**—On behalf of the members of the defence subcommittee, I would like to welcome everyone here today. As you are all aware, the subcommittee is looking into the loss of the HMAS *Sydney* and the other terms of reference with which you are all familiar.

At the outset I would like to restate the general statement that was made at the first meeting that we held in Canberra, that in this inquiry we are looking to establish the truth and to gather any information which may not have been possible for previous researchers to have. We recognise that it is 57 years after the event, but there could still be some information around, we believe, that has not yet come forward.

We have an absolute assurance from the government, from the Department of Defence and from the navy that no Official Secrets Act provisions or any other restraints on the public disclosure of information relevant to the *Sydney* will be the subject of any action at all. In other words, people have absolute immunity to come forward and say what they know and not be bound by any provisions of the official secrets act that they may mistakenly think applies to this event.

Before we start today I wish to advise that late yesterday afternoon, one of the members of the committee, Mr Roger Price from New South Wales, advised us that he will not be able to be in Melbourne until lunchtime today. As a result of that, since we are on a bare number for a quorum, we cannot constitute the meeting this morning as a formal committee meeting. It is quite possible for us to go ahead as an informal committee meeting and to all intents and purposes it will make no difference because we are interested in the views of our witnesses. The only limitation is that since it will be an informal meeting, it will not be covered by parliamentary privilege.

In a narrow legal sense, all that means is that if any witness wishes to slander another witness, they do not have the protection of the parliament. We have not had anyone, up to this point, engage in a slanderous attack on any other witness, and I hope that we do not have such an attack. I would prefer the inquiry to be conducted with good manners all the way through. You can put a point of view without demeaning or diminishing the evidence of anyone else. So, with that limitation which I advise you of, we can proceed with our hearing today. I expect that later on we will have Mr Price here and then we can become a formal committee with parliamentary privilege.

Senator Margetts from Western Australia will be participating in this hearing by means of a teleconference link. She is out of bed early this morning in Perth listening into every word that is said by the witnesses and she will have the opportunity to come in with questions at the appropriate time if she so chooses.

[9.44 a.m.]

**RANSON, Associate Professor, David Leo, Deputy Director, Victorian Institute of Forensic Medicine, 57-83 Kavanagh Street, Southbank, Victoria 3006**

**CHAIRMAN**—Welcome, Professor Ranson. Would you like to make an opening statement?

**Prof. Ranson**—Thank you. I was asked to consider some of the issues relating to the forensic pathology that could arise in relation to your inquiry, particularly in relation to term of reference No. 5:

the identification of any scientific procedure 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;

In that regard, I was contacted initially by Mr McGowan who asked me if I would prepare for him a short statement or advice relating to human identification on such issues that might arise in relation to this case, which I did. In the course of doing that, I had available to me a number of items or materials including the extract from the Australian Archives publication that I was sent and a paper prepared by W.J. Olson of the Department of Maritime Archaeology, Western Australian Maritime Museum. Those were essentially the materials I had available to me, together with the letter that I originally have from Mr McGowan.

**CHAIRMAN**—We have a copy of a letter from you to Mr Ted McGowan dated 14 November 1997. That was submitted to the subcommittee by Mr McGowan and is part of his submission. That has been authorised for publication. Do you wish to make any additional opening statements before we move into questioning?

**Prof. Ranson**—The only other thing I brought with me is, fortuitously, some of the work that I have been doing in terms of human identification that has recently been published. I brought with me a small number of photocopies of one of those publications that the committee may find useful in evaluating some of this sort of evidence.

**CHAIRMAN**—Thank you. If you can table that now, we will accept that as an exhibit formally in due course.

If we make the assumption that the site of the grave can be positively identified beyond reasonable doubt—because we certainly cannot be in the business, if the subcommittee does recommend to exhume the body, of digging up maybe several hundred cadavers, or what is left of them, 57 years on—what state would you expect a body to be in?

**Prof. Ranson**—It is a difficult question to answer with any degree of certainty because much will depend upon the nature of the grave site, including factors such as the soil compaction, disturbance of the site and so on. Assuming that we are dealing with a fairly well drained site, then I would expect skeletal remains to be present. There may or may not be portions of soft tissue remaining; they certainly can remain for a period of time. It would depend, I suppose, on other related factors, such as how badly damaged the body was prior to its being buried, as to survivability of such soft tissues. Skeletal remains is what I would expect to be evident, unless the grave site had been scattered or otherwise damaged in a way that meant those remains were subject to other privation.

**CHAIRMAN**—Let us go back one step further. The story is that there was a corpse that was badly decomposed found in a carley float off Christmas Island. How long would a corpse survive before all the soft tissue disintegrated in a tropical environment?

**Prof. Ranson**—The soft tissue can go very, very quickly if the body is not in some way protected or preserved. Assuming that did not happen in this case, and I would assume that would be unlikely, then the soft tissue would decompose probably more rapidly even in a grave because of the previous decomposition that has occurred. I would be very surprised if there was any soft tissue left unless the material had dried out at some point leading to a state of mummification, and that can occur in some situations. It would depend on the grave, the ability of fluids to flow away from the body into the surrounding soil—which, if it is light and sandy, can actually assist in drying out of the body—leading to preservation of some of those soft tissue structures.

**CHAIRMAN**—On the assumption that the body did come from *Sydney*, you are looking at a time interval from 19 November through to about 1 February, a period of roughly 13 weeks. How much breakdown would have occurred in the soft tissue in a tropical environment in that time?

**Prof. Ranson**—I think a very considerable amount of breakdown of soft tissue would have occurred. Seeing that the body is above the ground at this point and is being moved around to storage areas and so on—

**CHAIRMAN**—No, assuming that it is in the raft for three months.

**Prof. Ranson**—Again, it depends on the general environment that the body is in. If it is in high degrees of heat, then again you can get quite significant drying of the body with preservation of soft tissue structures.

**CHAIRMAN**—Presumably it is in very high humidity, being only inches above the water, and probably partially immersed as well.

**Prof. Ranson**—Yes. I would imagine that there will be soft tissue destruction. The description that I read in the reports of the body being decomposed certainly would not be



inconsistent with that time interval but, to be quite honest, you cannot be 100 per cent sure.

**CHAIRMAN**—One soldier phoned me two days ago from here in Victoria and told me of an incidence on a convoy going from Fremantle and carrying members of the 6th Division—convoy Y2—when an officer was lost overboard on 30 April 1940. He said there was a rumour that a life raft had also disappeared from one of the ships at the time. Is there any possibility that a body that was deceased somewhere around May 1940 could be the one that was washed up in February 1942? Would there be any trace left?

**Prof. Ranson**—The time until then being—

**CHAIRMAN**—About 14 months.

**Prof. Ranson**—I suppose the longer you leave that, the time interval, the greater the damage you would expect to see. However, if there is superficial drying out of surfaces of the body, that can be quite protective of a body.

**CHAIRMAN**—It was 21 months, really.

**Prof. Ranson**—Yes. The bottom line is that, without more detailed information on the actual state of the body when it was recovered, which you would expect to see in the autopsy report, it is very difficult to say. I have come across bodies that have been lying on the surface of the ground that have been there many months and yet there are still intact portions of soft tissue that are present. I have seen bodies reduced to skeletal remains in a matter of a few months.

There again, you have to look at the environment we are dealing with here. Land is very different from the sea in this sort of context, and with land, obviously, you get predation from lots of small creatures and insects and other features which you do not get in a marine environment. If the body, however, is exposed to small crustacea and obviously large predators such as sharks, then, of course, you would expect damage from those creatures.

**CHAIRMAN**—The reasonable assumption would be that if the grave site could be identified you are likely only to find hard calcified tissue there.

**Prof. Ranson**—Yes, I would imagine that is the most likely scenario.

**CHAIRMAN**—From that point, could you move, with DNA testing, to do any identification?

**Prof. Ranson**—Yes. There are a number of possibilities. DNA testing is a comparison test, and you must have some idea of who the person is in order to carry out a

matching process. In most aspects of human identification this sort of area involves such matching—in other words, you must have something to compare your subject material with. In DNA, what you would like, obviously, is some original biological material from that same person, and that is usually not possible, but sometimes it is possible if a lock of hair has been kept by somebody or there is a tooth stored somewhere or a blood-stained shirt or something like that which may have survived years. DNA is quite stable in those sorts of dry environments.

We have good evidence of extractable DNA being discovered from Egyptian mummies, and things like that. So we can have DNA survive for very long periods. Again it will depend upon the status of the bone. If it is very soggy and damp—so that there has been a lot of leaching of fluids through the bone from a grave and from water and washing and things like that—that will reduce the likelihood of DNA being extracted from the bone. If, however, the bones are found in a relatively dry state, in soil that has been well drained and so on, then there is a reasonable prospect of DNA being recovered.

There are two types of DNA that could be recovered in the system. The first is nuclear DNA and the other is mitochondrial DNA. Nuclear DNA is probably more likely to be lost. However, it does provide the best identifying type of characteristics. Mitochondrial DNA can be recovered from some poorer specimens and is of great use in comparison work, but it does not have the same reliability in terms of discriminating ability as nuclear DNA.

Mitochondrial DNA operates in a slightly different way in the sense that it is inherited via a maternal line. For example, in the story of the missing Princess Anastasia, I understand the last remaining bloodline that carries that maternal line is, in fact, Prince Phillip. So you can actually pick somebody who is from that same common maternal source and they should have inherited that same mitochondrial DNA. Therefore, surviving members of the family who have the same maternal link as the alleged deceased person might be expected to have the same mitochondrial DNA, and that could be then compared. As I said, the discrimination value is not as high as in nuclear DNA, but it certainly is a useful test, and is one that is available, and we use it for our own human identification processes.

**CHAIRMAN**—Thank you. What you are saying is that, if there has been a wet environment or if there has been water movement through the grave site, the possibility of the nuclear DNA is diminished.

**Prof. Ranson**—Yes, that is right.

**CHAIRMAN**—I have never been to Christmas Island, but it is described as being well vegetated. So I presume it has a high rainfall.

**Prof. Ranson**—I have also never been there.

**CHAIRMAN**—Being very close to the equator line, it probably does get quite a heavy fall in a concentrated period. The possibility is that the retention of DNA could well be diminished.

**Prof. Ranson**—Yes, certainly, in that event, that could be the case. That is not quite my area of expertise. The people in the areas of archaeology who deal with the recovery of remains in archaeological settings probably would have more information in that area than I could offer.

**CHAIRMAN**—The only other identifying feature—presumably there were no service tags or identifiers on the body at the time or they would have been noted and the identification made—would have to be of dental origin. What dental records exist?

**Prof. Ranson**—Again, you are correct. Probably the best method of identifying remains in this sort of setting is, in fact, dental studies. Again, it is a comparison technique. The major comparison is against dental records or dental X-rays that may be present. If they are not present, then you have simply nothing to match against.

The other technique of dental comparison that can be made is relating to superimposition techniques, where you take a photograph of a person in life and then you use the recovered skull and teeth to superimpose that portion of visible teeth on one another. That technique can be quite useful and is quite good at completely excluding people, and can in fact provide some quite positive matches. Again, it depends on the availability of suitable photographs of the right type—that is, showing some dentition. It also relies on some information about how that photograph was taken. It is important to get the context. It is nice to know what camera was used, what sort of distance the photograph was taken at and so on, because that can give you an idea of proportionality.

**CHAIRMAN**—We will wait for the bells to finish ringing; I imagine it will be three minutes. I have just had an inquiry from a member in the audience. The proceedings are covered by *Hansard* and there will be a transcript available. The only difference between this and a fully formal meeting is that point of protection against slander. There are no other differences; it is exactly the same. All witnesses, by the way—I did not mention this—are obliged to tell the truth, as if they were under oath. Otherwise, they might be hearing from me.

If we can go back to your evidence, Professor Ranson. One of the difficulties that we have is that Navy have given us conflicting advice about the existence of dental records. Some evidence has been that those records do not exist. Other evidence is that it is incomplete. Others maintain that, of course, Navy have everything. I think we have to sight the records—not that we are going to go through 645 medical reports to find that. But that is the first point: we may not have a starting point.

It seems that, in the submissions we have received, the phraseology is that the

cadaver possessed a good dentition or words to that effect. We do not have any evidence of who did the examination and, without being disrespectful to the medical profession, medicos are rarely able to comment on the dentition unless it is completely destroyed. If you have a cadaver, presumably with a degree of muscular rigidity there, unless someone separated the mandible, you would not know whether there were any restorations there.

**Prof. Ranson**—Are you referring to the autopsy that was conducted on the island?

**CHAIRMAN**—Yes.

**Prof. Ranson**—I do not think there would be any rigor at that time but, that aside—

**CHAIRMAN**—Wouldn't there be?

**Prof. Ranson**—No, because once there is established decomposition, rigor mortis completely passes away. Having said that, I would generally agree with you that most medical practitioners' knowledge on issues in relation to specialised dentistry is somewhat limited. I refer most of my material to specialist dentists precisely for that reason.

**CHAIRMAN**—The point I would make is that a superficial external examination really is not an indication of the state of the dentition, unless it was grossly carious or there were a large number of missing teeth.

**Prof. Ranson**—Yes. In general terms, in my own autopsies, I rarely comment in detail on the teeth unless, as you say, there is a striking feature about them. If it is an issue, I arrange for a dentist.

Perhaps I could continue with what I said about the issues of comparison of dental records. Once you are not able to compare the records, the next issue is one of trying to compare the appearances of the skull and teeth with photographs of the alleged individual in life. The next step if, for example, teeth have been lost, is to try to superimpose the image of the skull on an image of the head to look for comparable features of the two. Again, this technique has been applied in human identification quite successfully. However, it is better at excluding individuals than it is on identifying. It is good at taking a person out and saying that it could not be that person; it is less good at saying this is proof that it is this person.

From there you move to the more extensive techniques which I provided you with some information on such as facial reconstruction. There are a couple of ways in which this can be done. One is the more artistic modelling approach where you make a model of the skull which has been recovered. Using landmark points, you then build up soft tissue thicknesses according to standard charts and tables. Then, on top of that, you build up the face. It is the sort of technique that was shown in the film *Gorky Park* a few years ago but

it is a technique that is still used in forensic circles and can be of use. Again, it is good at excluding people and it sometimes can prompt people in saying that they think it might be X but it is not necessarily a very good positive mark of identification.

That same technique can also be carried out using computer modelling which can speed up the process considerably. There are a number of experts around the world who do those techniques. Australia currently has experts in the field of superimposition and also in the rebuilding or remodelling of faces.

**CHAIRMAN**—On the presumption that the grave site can be positively identified, in your opinion is it worth exhuming the body or not worth exhuming the body?

**Prof. Ranson**—I am not sure that I have enough information about this entire case to really answer that question. What I can say is that if a skull, alleged to be the skull of Mr X, is recovered from the site then there are a variety of techniques you can apply to try to see if it is Mr X's skull. Those include the direct comparison techniques, for example, with members of the family, comparison against dental records, comparison against any X-rays that may be in existence, comparison against any photographs of the person that might be in existence and then the remodelling techniques to rebuild the soft tissue on the skull to try to see if we can come to an appearance which actually matches the person. That, of course, has to be done 'blind' in a sense, in that the person doing the reconstruction does not know what the photograph looks like. One has to be very careful about that.

**CHAIRMAN**—Since you are a forensic expert, you would have a pretty fair working knowledge of the law, apart from your biological interest. What is the legal position on exhumation of a grave for identification purposes?

**Prof. Ranson**—My understanding would be that it would depend on the coroner's jurisdiction of that particular area. Essentially what would be happening would be—and I am not aware of the specific legislation relating to that jurisdiction—that a coroner would have to be informed that a death had occurred and that this death was in fact of an unknown person, falling within therefore the coroner's jurisdiction. If there is evidence to suggest that this might be a particular person, the coroner could authorise an exhumation for the purpose of determining this. It is a question of identifying who is the coroner in that jurisdiction who has that power and persuading them judicially, or putting an application to them, to the extent that there is information that might identify this individual and it is worth carrying out that investigation. Again, that would be subject to the usual coronial discretion and usual legal appeal processes that that might involve. That is my general understanding of the generalities that would apply in Victoria and I suspect that something fairly similar would exist in other states and related territories.

**Senator SANDY MACDONALD**—You said you had not been to Christmas Island and that if the body was in a well drained place, if the grave site could be identified, there

would be a greater chance of skeletal remains being there. Would a soil sample, made available to you, make any difference to your scientific interpretation or understanding as to how much tissue might remain?

**Prof. Ranson**—Probably not to me in the sense that you would need that sample to be examined by an archaeological expert in terms of grave sites and human remains and the likelihood of human remains being of high quality. That is something that really lies in the specialist archaeological and anthropology area. But in practical terms pathologists, for instance, work closely with those people; it is a team approach inevitably.

**Senator SANDY MACDONALD**—You mentioned there are two sorts of DNA: one is nuclear DNA and one is maternal DNA. If a higher level of leaching is taking place, you said that nuclear DNA would not be evident any more?

**Prof. Ranson**—The chances of detecting it would be far less.

**Senator SANDY MACDONALD**—In theory, if the body was exhumed and there was material available for maternal DNA, is it fair to say that, if it was possible to test a brother or sister of the 645 people who died on the *Sydney*, you would be able to positively identify that person?

**Prof. Ranson**—You could certainly exclude a number of people. The ability to positively identify the person on mitochondrial DNA is less satisfactory than it is with nuclear DNA. The rates given are possibly up to around one in a hundred, but other people could have the same analysed pattern of mitochondrial DNA. The difficulty is that the community surveys of mitochondrial DNA have not yet been performed to the level that is required to give more information about mitochondrial DNA. We know more about nuclear DNA; we are gaining more knowledge about mitochondrial DNA as time goes on. It could be that those odds would be raised once we know more about the distribution of types of mitochondrial DNA. That is work that is being undertaken at the moment.

**Senator SANDY MACDONALD**—In this case we would simply exclude with certainty people or a person who claimed that the body was a close relative?

**Prof. Ranson**—If you could detect the mitochondrial DNA and compare it against a person who was an alleged brother and it did not match—we know they are both from the same mother—then yes, you could absolutely exclude them.

**CHAIRMAN**—Yes, thank you. Is there any further advice that you would like to give to the committee?

**Prof. Ranson**—I think I have covered most of the areas.

**Senator MARGETTS**—I have some questions.

**CHAIRMAN**—Yes, Senator, I was just going to ask you. Have you a question?

**Senator MARGETTS**—Yes, thank you. I have been to Christmas Island, and the soil has been worked over by crabs over a long period of time and has probably passed through a crab's body at some stage, but I believe the problem on Christmas Island is that people cannot even grow vegetables, generally because of the nematodes. Have you had any experience with the impact on human remains in an area with a high level of nematodes?

**Prof. Ranson**—I do not have any personal experience of that specifically. I am not sure that that would affect particularly skeletal remains. Again, it would depend on the degree of protection the body has been given while in the ground. Certainly with soft tissue, once you have got access by ordinary soil organisms and creatures that live in the soil, I would expect a lot of the soft tissue to be gone. In fact, I would expect nearly all of it to be gone now.

**Senator MARGETTS**—Right. The reports, I believe, indicated that the corpse was dressed in a boilersuit, which would restrict the potential people on HMAS *Sydney*, if that was the ship—although it would not necessarily, but I guess you could probably focus any DNA testing on families of any of the crew who were working in that area. What is the cost of DNA testing? What sort of expense do you think would be involved?

**Prof. Ranson**—I have recently worked out some generalised costings for DNA, and to some extent obviously it depends on the number of tests you are doing. The cost has come down very considerably, in fact, in recent years. Bone samples are a little bit more costly to deal with than ordinary blood samples. I just have not got the mitochondrial figures in my mind at the moment. The ordinary nuclear DNA costs now are down to probably around \$100 or so for a test, but again grouping and grouping tests together might make that cheaper. Bone samples, of which presumably in this case there would really only be one, are a little bit more difficult to handle, and therefore there is a slightly increased cost. We might talk about figures like \$300 or \$400 for that.

Bulking tests may bring costs down between \$50 and \$100. One-off tests may be up to \$200. It just depends on how many samples you can run on the particular test equipment at the same time, and the more you run on it at the same time the cheaper your costs become. So those are the sorts of general figures, but, if you wanted more detail, I could actually obtain some more formal costings.

**Senator MARGETTS**—Right. So, presumably, if it was decided to go ahead that way, one could issue invitations to remaining families of the crew of the HMAS *Sydney*—and, presumably, if it was done in bulk, it might not be such a huge expense.

**Prof. Ranson**—No. I am not sure of the exact numbers that we are talking here, but if you are looking at tests in bulk testings of the order of \$100, then you can add up

the costs depending on how many people you have got.

**Senator MARGETTS**—Right. Thank you very much.

**CHAIRMAN**—Any further questions, Dee?

**Senator MARGETTS**—No, that is it. Thank you.

**CHAIRMAN**—Professor Ranson, thank you very much for your attendance here this morning. If you have any additional information you wish to submit, would you please forward it to the secretary. In due course you will be sent a transcript of your evidence which you may correct for any grammatical errors in it, and would you just check with *Hansard* before you go in case they do not know the spelling of 'mitochondrial' or something like that? Thank you very much.

**Prof. Ranson**—Thank you.



[10.20 a.m.]

**McGOWAN, Mr Edward, 71 Quinns Parade, Mt Eliza, Victoria 3930**

**CHAIRMAN**—I welcome Mr McGowan on behalf of the subcommittee. In what capacity do you appear before the subcommittee?

**Mr McGowan**—I appear as the brother of one of the crew of *Sydney* when it was lost in 1941.

**CHAIRMAN**—Thank you. As I mentioned earlier, this is an informal meeting and we do not have cover for any parliamentary privilege with respect to libel, but otherwise it is exactly the same. The proceedings here today are legal proceedings of the parliament and warrant the same respect which proceedings of the respective houses of parliament demand.

Although we are not requiring witnesses to be under oath, you should be aware that this does not alter the importance of the occasion. The subcommittee prefers that all evidence be given in public but, if you wish to give evidence in private, the subcommittee will give full consideration to that.

We have received your submission and that has been authorised for publication, together with a supplementary submission which we received today. Would you like to make an opening statement before we move to questions?

**Mr McGowan**—Mr Chairman, if I could correct you, what I have given you today is a copy of my opening statement; I have prepared additional copies for your benefit. I would like the opportunity of reading this as my opening statement.

Thank you for this opportunity to speak in support of my earlier written submission that is to be located commencing at page 887 in volume 5 of the printed submissions. A number of additional matters have arisen in the interim period, and in fact my research continues and is incomplete.

In the second last paragraph of page 890, I refer to an inference I believed could be drawn from the language of the terms of reference, that the raft and body brought ashore on Christmas Island were from *Sydney*. In preparing that part of my submission, I was also mindful of other matters that had earlier come to my attention which supported that view.

In early August of last year I became aware of the existence of a document, described as briefing notes, prepared for the Minister for Defence. It includes a summary of the Christmas Island incident and referred to prevailing currents and marine growth on the raft, and concluded with these words:

Even more telling is that no other vessel can be identified from which the raft might have come. The weight of the evidence therefore is that the raft and its deceased occupant were from the *Sydney*.

A copy of that document, entitled 'Aftermath', was given to me in good faith late in August of last year, and I now produce it as Exhibit S for Supplementary 1.

It was at about this time that others and I received correspondence from the honourable minister couched in language from which the inference earlier referred to could be drawn. Mr Chairman, I now draw your attention to paragraph 4 of that document, and ask that it be compared with pages 1842 and 1843 of volume 8 that forms part of the Department of Defence submission. You will note that there is a chapter in those pages headed 'Aftermath' that is a virtual reproduction of Exhibit S1, save that paragraph 4 is reduced to two lines and all material leading to the earlier conclusion and the conclusion itself have been deleted.

I also invite you to turn to the second last paragraph of page 1854 of volume 8. Two things arise from this, the first being that I regard the last words as quite offensive to John Heazlewood and myself—and I think John Heazlewood is known to members of the subcommittee. The suggestion that our contribution to this matter is clouded by us having a strong emotional attachment to the ship is without foundation. Heazlewood and I have extensive training in a profession the very cornerstone of which is objectivity, and to illustrate the point I refer you to the fourth paragraph of page 895 of volume 5 where I say in my submission that I regard the name in the shoe as having little evidentiary value as an aid to establishing identity, despite the views of others.

The second matter is the assertion that we have been unable to provide new information or evidence to substantiate our belief that the raft and body came from *Sydney*. Here, the author, J.H. Straczek, described as Senior Naval Historical and Archives Officer, has made, in my clear opinion, the same fundamental error as that made by previous Defence authorities. It was made by Captain Oldham in 1949 and has been repeated through to the issues paper released with the terms of reference of this inquiry. I have dealt briefly with this error at page 890, volume 5, but some of the matters now raised in the Defence submission make amplification necessary.

In a nutshell, I say that when I assert that the raft and body came from *Sydney* I have to support that by drawing to your attention all material, both for and against the proposition, in order that you may make a decision—a decision based on the balance of probabilities, the civil standard. For a brief time in August and September of last year, the Minister for Defence appeared to accept that as a proposition. It is now obvious from the submission prepared by Straczek, under the signature of the minister, that the old criteria have been restored and there is again an expectation of proof beyond reasonable doubt, the standard required in a criminal prosecution. That is an expectation both unreasonable and, I suggest, contrary to law.

Before proceeding further, I draw the attention of the committee to an old maxim which when interpreted means, 'He who asserts must prove.' I further refer you to three particular assertions, or hypotheses, contained in pages 1856 to 1858 of volume 8, that were made by Straczek. To each of them I say, 'He has raised them; he must prove them if he wishes to destroy my proofs.' Dealing briefly with them I say that the chapter headed 'Oceanographic conditions' on page 1857 has some merit, but will be addressed by other witnesses later today. As for the other two, the suggestions that the occupant of the raft was a deserter or perhaps a merchant seaman whose ship had been sunk, and who was then picked up by a warship and given an issue of clothing, are the product of a fertile but unrealistic imagination. Nevertheless, I repeat, and I urge you to accept, this proposition: it is not the responsibility of those who assert as I do to address every wild scenario dreamt up by those who now, once more, appear to wish to frustrate us; were it otherwise, this matter would never end.

Mr Chairman, you would be correct to assume that I have formed strong personal views concerning the Department of Defence submission as it relates to the Carley raft and body. I believe there is justification for my views. Mr Straczek is either the author of both documents headed 'Aftermath' or he has plagiarised the first one. He seems to be clutching at straws in suggesting that the body might be that of a deserter or perhaps of a merchant seaman kitted out with a naval issue shoe that did not fit him.

Finally, in dealing with Mr Straczek I call into question his competence as an historian and archivist. I produce exhibit S2, an article written by him and published in the October-December 1996 issue of *The Navy*, the magazine of the Navy League of Australia. The article was entitled 'The Royal Australian Navy in the Vietnam War' and, inter alia, referred to HMAS *Sydney* (III) making several runs from Australia to Vietnam and, when deployed to Vietnam, being escorted by other units of the RAN. I now quote from that article:

On one such trip her escort included the aircraft carrier HMAS *Melbourne*, though *Melbourne* did not enter Vietnamese waters.

In fact, *Melbourne* was in Vietnamese waters from 31 May until 22 June 1965, from 25 April until 6 May 1966 and from 25 May until 9 June 1966, and was escorting *Sydney* on each occasion, being the first, third and fourth trips to Vung Tau made by *Sydney*. On these occasions, the ship's company on *Melbourne* qualified for: one, the Vietnam Logistics Support Medal; two, the Returned from Active Service Badge; three, repatriation benefits; and, four, war service home loan entitlements. One would think that the Senior Naval Historical and Archives Officer would have known, or would have been able to research accurately, the movements of the flagship of the Royal Australian Navy.

I now refer to the third paragraph of my submission, at page 896, volume 5. Sadly, this appears to be a further illustration of the obstructive attitude of the Department of Defence, or Navy, toward those seeking the truth or, as in my case, the identification of

the sailor interred on Christmas Island. At page 896, volume 5, I advised that despite a request for the dental records of my brother being forwarded to naval health services on 1 October 1997, as at 3 December 1997, when I made my submission, these had not been provided. A further request, sent on 27 November, was not even acknowledged, as had been the case with the earlier request. A further request, on 13 January 1998, written in much stronger language, was acknowledged on 3 February 1998, but that was singularly negative and unhelpful. I produce, as exhibits S3 and S4, copies of the correspondence referred to above.

The reasons for refusing the request contained in the letter from the Defence health service branch are quite extraordinary. I am assured by Mr Heazlewood that requests by him before 1 October 1997 for medical records of other sailors were complied with—that is, they were supplied. The first paragraph of the second page is arrant nonsense. Next of kin means just that: the next of kin in order of succession at any particular time. It could not be otherwise, if one thinks about it. A situation that I am sure has occurred on many occasions is where the next of kin recorded on a service record has predeceased the serviceman and the record has not been amended. A like situation would occur if the serviceman marries or divorces during his period of service. Moreover, what if a serviceman, whose parents are deceased, is an adult, not married, but has siblings?

A further illustration of my point is found in this document, exhibit S5—the attestation form completed by my late brother-in-law when he joined the army in 1940. That document contains a question, ‘Who is your next of kin?’ Then it sets out the order of succession of next of kin. This document, exhibit S6, which was sent to all naval establishments in August 1997 placing a gag on comment on anything to do with *Sydney* (II), further illustrates the entrenched and unhealthy attitude of those in authority to anyone having an interest in that unfortunate ship.

The refusal to produce the dental records of my brother is particularly unfortunate for, as I said earlier, he who asserts must prove and I have asserted that my brother had perfect teeth. I am able to provide credible evidence of the condition of his teeth at the time he joined the navy in 1938 at age 17. I am unable to say that he did not develop dental caries in the following three years.

In support of him having perfect teeth at age 17, I produce an affidavit, exhibit S7, sworn by his elder sister, Elsie Elizabeth Morrison, who commenced school in 1926 on the same day as her younger brother. Exhibit S8, which I produce, has been sworn by his younger sister, Alice May Jamieson, who attended the same school. They both attest that Tom had perfect teeth. I also attended the same school, the Tongala State School in Victoria. I still have a vivid recollection of the annual visit of the state school dentist—vivid because on one occasion when he was drilling one of my teeth with his old treadle driven drill he whacked me across the ears for bawling like a poddy-calf. Little wonder that Tom had a reputation for being lucky to escape the drill. I also produce exhibit S9, a reproduction of a photograph of my brother that was taken probably between May 1939

and June 1940, illustrating that his front upper teeth were in excellent condition.

There is one final matter on the question of teeth. There is an addendum at pages 898 and 899 of volume 5 in my original submission wherein I refer to a thesis written by Surgeon Captain (D) R. Woolcott titled 'A survey of dental caries in the RAN, 1940.' Mr John Heazlewood has read this paper on my behalf, and a brief summary of his findings is contained in his letter to me of 14 January 1998. I produce that letter as exhibit S10. The statistics given are of particular interest, not the least being that, of 1,750 recruits examined during the years 1936 to 1938, only one had perfect teeth.

In opening, I mentioned that my research was continuing and incomplete. Recently I began the task of tracing the use of kapok during World War II, in an endeavour to determine the extent of the use of that material in the construction of carley rafts. To date, I have traced several publications and papers about the kapok tree, written between 1920 and 1941. It is clear that the kapok fibre was used extensively by both the Royal Navy and the Royal Australian Navy during that time and particularly during World War II. When used in life jackets, the supporting force of kapok is said to be 3½ times that of cork.

It was also interesting for me to find, when reading the autobiography of the prominent author Ruth Park, that John Dedman, the wartime minister for war organisation of industry, made an order that pillows were to be stuffed with grain huskings and not kapok. My search continues.

In conclusion, I refer to the affidavit of Mrs Vera Kelly found at pages 946 to 948 of my original submission. Mrs Kelly lost her eldest son on *Sydney*. She is now in her 99th year, lives by herself and enjoys good health. I spoke to her last Friday. Among other things, she said, 'When is the navy going to do something about it?'—that is, finding out what happened to the *Sydney*—'I would like to know who that sailor is on Christmas Island.' Perhaps Mrs Kelly and the greater *Sydney* family are owed an answer to those questions. Thank you.

**CHAIRMAN**—Thank you very much.

**Mr McGowan**—Could I just add one matter that you raised with Dr Ranson as to who can order an exhumation? If you wish, I believe I can provide that information.

**CHAIRMAN**—Very well.

**Mr McGowan**—I believe that it is either the Western Australian coroner under the Western Australian (CI) Coroners Act or, more particularly, the honourable Alex Somlyay, Minister for Regional Development, Territories and Local Government, who has the authority to order exhumation. He has indicated that, if this committee makes such a finding, he will sign an order for exhumation.

**CHAIRMAN**—Thank you.

**Senator SANDY MACDONALD**—We have had evidence that the medical records for the *Sydney* crew were very incomplete. Do you have an opinion on that?

**Mr McGowan**—No. I can only be guided by the information that I have been given, and it was provided in one of the exhibits that I produced today, which indicated that the records were rather fragmented. However, I find it difficult to believe that the filing system of naval records would be such that they could not be obtained for 645 sailors.

**Senator SANDY MACDONALD**—Could it be that they were carried on board the *Sydney*?

**Mr McGowan**—Certainly some records would be carried on board. I do not know naval procedure but I believe every sailor starts his life at HMAS *Cerberus*. He would be medically examined upon entering the service. I would have thought that there would be a copy of his records on his entering the service.

**Senator SANDY MACDONALD**—I had at the back of my mind—and I may be wrong—that there were only credible medical records for 60 or 70 of the *Sydney* crew.

**Mr McGowan**—I have not been advised, other than as is contained in the exhibit that I have produced.

**Senator SANDY MACDONALD**—What about dental records? Do you believe that there are dental records in existence?

**Mr McGowan**—I have no opinion on that at all. There ought to be dental records in existence. However, I have to qualify that. Again, there ought to be dental records of the condition of a serviceman's teeth on his enlistment, but I believe that dentists are on board ships, particularly large ships and, unless the sailor's dental records are taken from *Cerberus* and accompany him or her wherever he or she goes—as it is, these days—then they may well be missing.

**Senator SANDY MACDONALD**—Do you believe, though, that there would be dental records available of your brother when he joined the navy and entered it through HMAS *Cerberus*?

**Mr McGowan**—I believe there ought to be a record of the examination of his teeth when he joined the service in 1938.

**Senator SANDY MACDONALD**—I know it is an awfully long time ago, but do you recall if your brother ever visited a dentist before he joined the navy?

**Mr McGowan**—He certainly did. I have given evidence today that he visited the dentist each year at school. You have to appreciate that in 1938, when Tom joined the navy, I was two years of age and that, when he went down, I was five years of age, and so my memory of my brother is not very strong. I am advised by one of my sisters that she believes that there was not even a dentist in Tongala, and it is her belief that he would never have attended a dentist. However, it was but a short period between the time he finished school and the time he entered the navy. Again, his teeth would have been examined upon his entering the navy.

**Senator SANDY MACDONALD**—Even if there were Victorian state school records of the dentists who visited Tongala Public School in 19-when-ever, if your brother had perfect teeth or good teeth, there would be hardly any record kept of that visit, even if the records were available.

**Mr McGowan**—I doubt that there would be; yes.

**Senator SANDY MACDONALD**—On another subject, do you believe the site of the grave on Christmas Island can be identified?

**Mr McGowan**—Yes, I am quite confident. There is a witness giving evidence later today who, if taken to Christmas Island, will be able to take you to almost the exact spot. Of course, you will have to make a subjective judgment of that person's evidence. But I have interviewed him on a number of occasions and I am very confident that, despite him possibly having drawn the location of the grave incorrectly on an archaeological survey map, were he taken to the site—and he has agreed to go to Christmas Island, if and when asked—he will take you directly to that site.

**Senator SANDY MACDONALD**—I want you to confirm, in line with my previous questions, whether you believe that there is some information about medical records and dental records that Navy have and that they are not providing.

**Mr McGowan**—No; I have no evidence at all to say that. Nothing has come to my notice that would prompt me to say that that is the case.

**Senator SANDY MACDONALD**—But would commonsense and your knowledge of the navy's processes suggest that that might be the case?

**Mr McGowan**—I have no knowledge of Navy procedure. I have to accept what has been placed in the letter: that the records are disjointed and difficult to locate and that the information contained on them is scant. That is the only evidence that I have been able to discover; and, if that is the case, at this stage I have got no reason to disbelieve it.

**CHAIRMAN**—Thank you, Mr McGowan.

**Senator MARGETTS**—You obviously have indicated that you would like an attempt to be made to exhume the body. What would you like to see happen in relation to the Christmas Island site?

**Mr McGowan**—I believe that a suggestion was made—and I am sorry that the lady's name escapes me momentarily, but she is giving evidence later today—that a commemorative plaque or a commemoration of some sort be left on Christmas Island; but I believe that the body, if it is identified as being from *Sydney*, should be dealt with according to the wishes of the relatives of the dead sailor. I guess the answer to your question is that, if the body can be identified, I would like to see the relatives asked what their wishes are and their wishes carried out.

To amplify that a little, I have had a conversation with the Acting Director of the War Graves Commission at that time, who said, 'We would make the grave on Christmas Island a war grave, and the body would be reinterred up there. It is our practice to inter service persons who are located in circumstances like this, in the place where they died. We would make that a war grave, we would fly the relatives up to Christmas Island and have a ceremony, and we would look after it henceforth.' I said, 'Hang on a minute! That man did not die on Christmas Island; he died probably 1,000 or 1,500 miles away from Christmas Island.' There was a long silence after I made that comment, and then there was a qualification: 'In some circumstances, we do reinter them in mutually acceptable places to the families,' and that is what I would like to see happen.

**Senator MARGETTS**—Have you read the reports in relation to what the corpse was wearing at the time it was sighted—reports that it was wearing a boiler outfit?

**Mr McGowan**—A boiler suit, yes. I can only go on the archival material of the interviews of Captain Reg Smith and I think it was Bunny Baker, the radio operator on Christmas Island, who was also interviewed during the course of their evacuation from Christmas Island. They advised that the sailor was in a boiler suit that was bleached white by the sun.

**Senator MARGETTS**—Does that accord with your brother? Was your brother working in that area?

**Mr McGowan**—I have been informed reliably from a number of naval sources that, whilst stokers were generally issued at that time with boiler suits and the crew who worked in other areas of the ship were generally issued with bib and brace overalls, it was common practice for not only ordinary ranks but officer ranks to obtain, by one means or another, either naval issue suits or other boiler suits that may have been bought off the shelf in a shop—for the reason that a boiler suit, as I understand it, was the most comfortable article of clothing worn on ships.

**Senator MARGETTS**—Do you have an opinion on whether effort should be made



to locate the HMAS *Sydney*? If so, what do you think should be done?

**Mr McGowan**—I have not had time to turn my mind to that. I am sorry, but I do not believe that I am in a position to properly answer that question, and I do not think it would be fruitful for this inquiry.

**Senator MARGETTS**—Thank you very much.

**CHAIRMAN**—All the submissions we have had in relation to this body talk about a perfect dentition. The first I have seen of Captain Woolcott's thesis is the letter that you gave us a few minutes ago, and I will use the figures he has there. Firstly, there is a degree of ambiguity about it, because he talks about using molar teeth as an index, and that they were likely to have caries. It is not clear whether they are teeth that have had caries and been restored, or whether the teeth were carious and unrestored at the time. Even accepting that ambiguity, he gives a figure of 91 per cent of recruits at age 20 and 76 per cent of recruits at age 18 that have a carious experience. Very crudely, and it is very crude statistically, that means that greater than 54 members of the crew, if you take an average age of 20, would have been caries free at the time; and, if you take an average age of 18, greater than 164 would have been caries free.

**Mr McGowan**—With respect, I think you are misreading that.

**CHAIRMAN**—Please tell me where I am wrong.

**Mr McGowan**—I have a copy of it here.

**CHAIRMAN**—It is the second last paragraph on the page.

**Mr McGowan**—He is saying that, for age 18, 76 out of every 100 sailors had dental caries; for age 20, 91 out of 100 had dental caries.

**CHAIRMAN**—Yes. That means that nine did not have dental caries.

**Mr McGowan**—That is correct.

**CHAIRMAN**—There were 645 in the crew.

**Mr McGowan**—Yes.

**CHAIRMAN**—So that means that 54 individuals were caries free.

**Mr McGowan**—Yes, but he is referring only to molars.

**CHAIRMAN**—Yes.

**Mr McGowan**—The body on Christmas Island is said to have had a perfect set of teeth. One could have caries in a molar and not in other teeth, or one could have caries in one's front teeth and not in one's molars.

**CHAIRMAN**—Clinically—with the greatest of respect—that is unlikely. The reason Dr Woolcott used the first molar is because it is the first tooth of the permanent dentition to emerge and it is a good indicator of caries activity. I am not saying you could not get caries in an anterior tooth, but it is most likely that, if the first molar is caries free, the rest of the dentition—using your phrase, on the balance of probabilities—would be caries free, that is all.

**Mr McGowan**—Yes, I accept that. But I think you must also accept that it appears that he examined 1,750 recruits in three years and found one person who had perfect teeth. If you are saying that there were 50-odd on *Sydney*, that does not fall into line with his earlier statement. We have also got to bear in mind that this document is in the Fisher Library in Sydney, and that is why I was not able to access it.

**CHAIRMAN**—What is the Fisher Library?

**Mr McGowan**—The Fisher Library is part of the University of Sydney. This thesis was found in the rare books section of the Fisher Library of the University of Sydney. But, in any event, I tracked it down to the Fisher Library at the University of Sydney and one Saturday morning John went and read the book for me and extracted these statistics. That is the only information I have from the book. I do not know whether it is a thesis; it certainly goes for more than a page and two lines. You would have to read the thesis in its entirety before you could draw the conclusion that either of us is attempting to draw at the present time.

**CHAIRMAN**—You state on page 5 of your submission that 'deliberate controversy as to the location of the grave has at times been perpetrated.' Whom do you think were the perpetrators of that and what would be their motive? I have read the submissions that have come in and I might be naive but I accepted them in good faith, that there was some ambiguity about the identification of the grave site.

**Mr McGowan**—I do not believe there has been any submission received that has attempted to do that. I am speaking of events that have occurred, I believe, and this was material that was anecdotal to me, that some people have tried to identify or have identified the grave on previous occasions over a period of years. It has been placed in different spots. Anecdotally people have said to me it was felt by the people—and I cannot even recall who it was now—that at times people were trying to mislead. I believe that some of the Christmas Islanders did not want the location of the grave to be found. That is what I was meaning by that. There is nothing sinister in that at all.

**CHAIRMAN**—As well as the location of the grave you would be aware that there

was debate about the origin of the carley float and there are those who strenuously maintain it came from *Sydney* and no other ship. Do you have a view on the origin of the carley float at Christmas Island? Do you feel strongly that it was from the *Sydney*?

**Mr McGowan**—I am strongly of the opinion that the overwhelming preponderance of evidence is that it came from *Sydney*.

**CHAIRMAN**—What do you base that on?

**Mr McGowan**—Anecdotal evidence of Captain Smith and Bunny Baker, and others on the island at the time on the marine growth and the state of the body which indicated, as I understand it from those reports, that it had been in the water for approximately three months. The marine growth corresponded with it. The raft obviously had been in a battle because of shrapnel and a bullet being found in the raft. Again, this is anecdotal evidence. It is all the evidence and it is the best evidence that is available. Then there is the evidence of Dr Bye and Mrs Rosslyn Page of the driftcard test which proves unquestionably that material placed in the water at about the location of the battle in similar conditions can find its way to the location of Christmas Island in approximately the time that it took the raft to drift from *Sydney* on 19 November 1941 to 6 February 1942.

The person in the raft was in a raft that was obviously naval patent, it was in a raft that was manufactured in Australia. It was painted grey, as are naval ships. It had on it the number 2, and the material that I have read says that *Sydney* had her carley rafts numbered and that raft No. 2 was, I think—I can picture it on the ship, but not being a naval person, I cannot recall of it here—towards the forward section of the ship. It was made in Australia, as indicated by the brand on the metal flotation tanks. The paintwork, the number on it, the shoe in the raft being—according to Captain Oldham—definitely of naval issue all point to the fact that the person in the raft was a sailor. I do not think there is any doubt, on that material, that the raft and the body came from *Sydney*,

**CHAIRMAN**—You have obviously put a lot of work into the whole of the subject.

**Mr McGowan**—I wish I had been paid for it.

**CHAIRMAN**—Have you any view as to what the fate of the *Sydney* was?

**Mr McGowan**—In what respect?

**CHAIRMAN**—What happened after the *Sydney* met *Kormoran*, in your judgment?

**Mr McGowan**—I have no reason to disbelieve the versions that are contained in Barbara Winters's book, and that is based on interviews she had with the German

survivors—and I have spoken with one of the German survivors. The *Sydney* was last seen heading in a south-easterly direction, well and truly ablaze from stem to stern, travelling at approximately seven knots, and she disappeared over the horizon.

Any conclusion that one could draw after that would be pure speculation, and I am not in the business of speculation. I do not know what happened to her. I do not believe she blew up because I believe if she did it would have been one almighty blast and it would have been heard.

If you read the evidence of Mrs McDonald, which she gave you in Western Australia, all of the interviews that she has conducted with the people up and down the Western Australian coast and the evidence of the German survivors indicated they did not hear a big bang, they did not see a large eruption of flame. I do not believe she blew up, but she possibly did—I don't know.

**CHAIRMAN**—Could I put it to you that if it did not detonate, why weren't there survivors?

**Mr McGowan**—There are countless thousands of people in Australia who want to know the answer to that and they are hoping that you, Mr Chairman, and your subcommittee, will come up with an answer. I cannot provide it.

**CHAIRMAN**—Thank you very much, Mr McGowan. Is there any further advice you would like to give the committee?

**Mr McGowan**—No.

**Proceedings suspended from 11.07 a.m. to 11.25 a.m.**

**CRAILL, Mrs Barbara Joan, 7 Graham Avenue, Hackham, South Australia 5163**

**CHAIRMAN**—I call the meeting to order and welcome Mrs Craill on behalf of the subcommittee. In what capacity do you appear before the committee?

**Mrs Craill**—I am a retired schoolteacher and I am the third daughter of Royal Australian Navy Gunner, Walter Edward Albert Freer, Able Seaman, an experienced sailor of 12 years and an old salt, aged 38 years.

**CHAIRMAN**—Thank you. You have heard the introduction I have given to previous witnesses and there is no point in repeating those. Would you like to make a short opening statement? We have received your submission of course and it has been accepted for publication.

**Mrs Craill**—I have an opening statement but I would like to alter November 4, page 3 of my statement. There is a correction. On page 3, on November 4 I said the ship returned to Fremantle but I doubt whether it was Fremantle. They anchored out in the bay and could not even see the town but they did tie up at the wharf. I said they were launched ashore; they did tie up at the wharf and were given 3¼ hours shore leave.

**CHAIRMAN**—Thank you. Do you wish to say anything further?

**Mrs Craill**—Yes. I have some new material, an exhibit, a photograph of my father at the guns with five other personnel, four of them in overalls, all in combination or boiler suits of varying shades, faded. My father's are very faded. He did take some kit from home. I have a letter written on July 10, stating what he had brought from home but not specifically saying overalls. But for the short time he was in war service they were very faded.

**CHAIRMAN**—We now move to questions.

**Mrs Craill**—Could I have an opening statement?

**CHAIRMAN**—I am sorry.

**Mrs Craill**—My father wrote some four dozen letters home to his wife, my mother, from 3 June to 11 November 1941. He was appointed to *Sydney* on 11 August and boarded on 28 August 1941. It is my belief that some content gives truth to lead up to where little exists today in the letters and it is important to ascertain a true understanding of the readiness of the ship and the fast and accurate skills of all gun stations, specifically in letters of 23 October and 1 November 1941. From 23 October, I will quote my father:

I can whack the big stuff round too believe me . . . no beating about the bush either with us, straight into it now, come what may big or little, it's answer or go down . . . only trouble all have answered so far, although we have had two thrills, one was a close call for one ship that didn't speak quick enough, cleared for battle, but every body was disappointed when all was well, blood thirsty lot on here I can tell you and spoiling for a fight, Whoopie.

First of November, I quote:

. . . this morning we up anchors and away merrily once again and the plane came out so we got our shoot in at last, all did well at it too and so the 4" guns had a lash at it too. Gee it was wonderful shooting, all on the target, hell they are good shots on here alright, with all the guns, its a pleasure to see all hitting . . . make short shift of anything that comes along alright . . .

Initially, it was these and other letters that speak of the Royal Australian Navy thoroughly training its men—and such was the case with the *Sydney* with the daily drills, gun drill and other drills such as smokescreens—that was behind my mother's and my entire family's disbelief. Compounded by the official report based on enemy survivors who sought glory not humiliation and the suspicion of Japanese involvement, stories of inefficiency have never rung true. My father wrote that it was 'speak or go down.'

My father was on the steering station, when *Sydney* crossed the Great Australian Bight on 22 September, et cetera. He wrote of the ship coming down heavy on one side and things banged. He also states later that the worst thing that happened was the lads lost their meals. He also wrote on many occasions that *Sydney* bucked and jumped about even in a moderate sea.

From his letter of 8 October 1941:

I'll be alright believe me, we are quite safe on here although she does buck about the ocean, we can match ourselves against all comers, big and small and raring to go at that.

He also said that he was getting used to it—and you just had to get used to it.

My father's attitude was that drill was a matter of life and death and not a problem at all—he rather enjoyed it. He wrote on 2 October:

Every day, work play and drill to keep the lads up to the mark and the ship efficient . . . I've got a lot of interest in it . . . some is real good to watch and take part in, gives me a thrill to know and do the things that it takes for the real job should it ever arise and come our lot to fight it out.

The same letter, referring to smokescreens, 2 October:

Getting into nice white clothes and be up at the guns when down goes a smoke screen . . . the suits look . . . glorious . . . nice and black with soot . . . still its all in the days work.

My father was very good in 'all in the days work'.

This is new material: did the crew know of their mission? His letter of 24 September stated:

Well with a little luck we will know all or nearly all soon now . . . wish I could tell you more of what is happening, but it just cant be done for safety sake and our boys lives in the bargain.

I will refer to another one because I have had time to cross-reference my father's letters and see what he has to say. Submission 97—I do not know that I am to mention the name—makes reference to Cooks, Appendix A, 3.4, 'I have permission to say that Petty Officer Quinn was a cook and also a gun layer on X turret,' which is the stern I do believe. The battle took place at about mealtime, so we are told, and Petty Officer Quinn had permission to be at his gun station, not the magazine room. Did he have time to change?

There is confusion with action stations. Again, with submission 97, Commentary, page 2011, on 3 October 1941, the comment was made that closing gun stations did not occur. So I looked at what my father wrote. I refer back to his letter of 23 October on 'two thrills'. He said they were 'cleared for battle'. My understanding—and I am not an expert—is that 'cleared for battle' comes after action stations.

On 6 October father took over all the provision stores, known as the 'Captain of the Holds'—a slang term. On 11 October:

The stores . . . are all mine now, and I want them put in as I like it and to stay put all the time till needed.

And then:

The first sea we meet up with over goes the lot, I put all the holds in order the night before in my own time with the aid of two men that are doing punishment so as to get all in order to suit me.

It was a mess when he took it over. I was led to believe it was storm damage.

My entire family hope that *Sydney* will be found and searched for evidence and that the unknown sailor will be exhumed, tested and reinterred with overdue honour and a plaque be placed at the site and the body reinterred, with the knowledge of the relatives, preferably in his home state or, if unknown, at the War Memorial in Canberra. This is, to the best of my knowledge, based on my father's letters and my family behind me. I am honoured and grateful to assist the inquiry with these details.

**CHAIRMAN**—Thank you very much, Mrs Craill.

**Mrs Craill**—I also have extra pieces taken out of letters that may be of interest as an exhibit.

**CHAIRMAN**—Thank you. Senator Margetts, do you have any questions?

**Senator MARGETTS**—Yes. Thank you. Mrs Craill, when the inquiry heard evidence in Perth, we were advised that the *Sydney* was restocked with ammunition—chock-full, if you like—and also that the tanks were full. I guess it was considered that, potentially, even a minor blow to the ship might have resulted in a major fire on board. Does that accord with the information that you have gathered?

**Mrs Craill**—My father has not said anything about loading fuel, except Port Melbourne or one of those ports near there, before they set off across the Great Australian Bight. That is the only reference he made. That is of diesel.

**Senator MARGETTS**—Can I assume that you would be interested in participating in DNA testing if that were available?

**Mrs Craill**—Yes. My eldest sister, five years my senior, and I are available for DNA testing and are both willing participants.

**Senator MARGETTS**—What would you believe would be a suitable memorial on Christmas Island?

**Mrs Craill**—There is a memorial at Carnarvon. I would consider a cairn with plaque a suitable memorial. I understand there is nothing at the moment.

**Senator MARGETTS**—Some people have suggested that the HMAS *Sydney*, if it is found, should not be disturbed as a mark of respect for the dead. Do you share that?

**Mrs Craill**—I do not share that. My family and I—I suppose I speak for myself but I have the backing of my family—all endorse the finding of HMAS *Sydney*. I think it is vital for evidence. There has been such a controversy that it is vital to find it for evidence, and afterwards for the satisfaction of all people concerned.

**Senator MARGETTS**—Do you have an opinion where the HMAS *Sydney* might be located?

**Mrs Craill**—I am not an expert. I can only go on what I have read in different submissions. I am very interested in the Geraldton-Port Gregory area as opposed to Carnarvon.

**Senator SANDY MACDONALD**—You state in your submission that a final blow ‘would have come from an unseen enemy’. What do you think the enemy was? Who do you think the enemy was? What evidence do you have to support your beliefs?

**Mrs Craill**—I have no evidence. It is just a feeling, a theory, from reading over



the years, and a feeling that we have held for 56 years, that something else occurred because of all the letters that we have that the *Sydney* was well prepared, certainly in the latter parts of October and early November. It is a supposition. Therefore, I feel that either the flag was perhaps disguised and something happened about the disguise that did not follow the proper patterns—I do not know the actual naval terms—or that it is likely that there was Japanese involvement in that before they entered the war. I stand by that belief without having evidence because, at this stage, I do not believe there is evidence.

**Senator SANDY MACDONALD**—You state in your submission that ‘it was extremely hurtful that the Germans were allowed to return to Germany in so short a time’.

**Mrs Crail**—Yes.

**Senator SANDY MACDONALD**—What would have been an appropriate time, and why do you think they should have been further imprisoned in Australia?

**Mrs Crail**—Some prisoners may have been officers—I assume they may have been used as exchange prisoners—and they returned, I believe, before 1946, and the remainder returned later, which is to me a good time for the duration of the war. I guess it was for a purpose, to save someone else, but it was hurtful that that happened, because we are not privy to why they do those things in war.

**Senator SANDY MACDONALD**—In response to Senator Margetts you made the point about what you would regard as a suitable memorial on Christmas Island, and also you mentioned the memorial at Quobba Station at Carnarvon.

**Mrs Crail**—Yes. There is one there.

**Senator SANDY MACDONALD**—One of the things that is exercising our mind is what would be a suitable memorial to the *Sydney*. It was a magnificent fighting ship, and it sank—for what reason we will probably never know. Basically, we know what the facts are.

**Mrs Crail**—Yes.

**Senator SANDY MACDONALD**—Do you have a view about a suitable memorial?

**Mrs Crail**—I have read the inscription by photograph, but I have not visited the site there. People know I am interested and they send me material. That is suitable for that particular area but, for Christmas Island, I believe that it should indicate that the unknown sailor has been exhumed for testing and is not reinterred there, because I understand it is not a military cemetery. A cairn could inscribe the HMAS *Sydney* battle in brief and that that unknown sailor who came has been removed—or whatever the terminology is—and

taken home.

**Senator SANDY MACDONALD**—I am not so much stressing your submission because I know you said that in your submission, but what is your independent, personal view of a memorial to the *Sydney*? If I could put it in perspective, the victors write history. As to how many people on the *Kormoran* knew what went on, we do not know, but there were probably not very many. A lot of *Kormoran* sailors survived but very few actually knew what went on. We know that *Sydney* came too close, and for what reason we will probably never know. We know that *Sydney* fought valiantly to the end and it sank, and that it also sank the *Kormoran*. That is all we know.

I was thinking that if we were to recommend a very official memorial, both to the crew and to the *Sydney* itself, and we were able to have it opened in a very official way, would you, as somebody who has lived with this all your life in not having a father and through being unsure—and really, to be quite frank, never likely to know—exactly what happened, would that make it easier for you?

**Mrs Craill**—It is pointless to have a memorial without exhuming the body. To put a memorial on Christmas Island you would need to go through the process of exhuming the body and properly testing, if that is at all possible.

**Senator SANDY MACDONALD**—Could I ask you if you are hanging on to the hope that that body on Christmas Island is your father?

**Mrs Craill**—My father had excellent teeth. He was 38 years old. The point is that I have my sister's verification for that because she remembers those sorts of things. Yes, that could be my father. The point is it could be a person from HMAS *Sydney*, and that is what I am really touched about. That may be one of them, and that is what is important to me.

**CHAIRMAN**—Mrs Craill, you are very fortunate, as a family, having all those letters. I think there is a national value in them too. I do not suppose it happens today because troops overseas get on the satellite phone or inmarsat and come through in real time, or they send little tapes; they do not write letters anymore. Having read all his letters, what is your overall impression of them? He seems, from the evidence you have given us, to have been quite uncritical of his ship, and he had a high degree of confidence and high morale.

**Mrs Craill**—Yes, he did. He was a very safety conscious person, and that is not just my opinion. I have that not just from my letters but from people who knew him. If there was something that was wrong, he would want to see it right. He was critical of the boat in that it was not as large as the *Australia* initially when he went on it, but he had to get used to it. In the crossing of the bight it came down heavy on one side and, as a sailor, he would know that there was danger there and that something perhaps was not

loaded or had shifted in the storm and that they could capsize.

He would have that uppermost in his mind and that would be his criticism—rocking about on the ocean. He was on land for six years. He was a civilian for six years before he re-enlisted. He worked for the Commonwealth Bank as a security guard. He had to get used to it. By that time he was used to being at sea, but it did buck about and he considered it did so, like HMAS *Brisbane*. He made a comparison to that crossing in 1923. But after that, he said that, when they were in calmer seas, everything was wonderful.

**CHAIRMAN**—The impression I get from your letters and your submission is that your father thought it was an efficient and well-trained crew. That is not in dispute in any way.

**Mrs Craill**—No. I have heard people make comment in papers that the crew were young, that they were not trained enough and that the captain was slack—things like this. That is why that emphasis comes out strongly because my father said the opposite. When he entered the ship at the end of August, he knew that he would have to get used to a younger crew of course and he was determined to do his bit. By October, he was singing their praises. He said that it was efficient but it is not always the case in reports that I have read and he has contradicted those reports.

**CHAIRMAN**—These are all the questions that I have. The other questions have been asked by Senator Margetts and Senator Macdonald. Is there any further information that you would like to tender to the committee?

**Mrs Craill**—No. I have given those things. Thank you very much. I am grateful for the chance to help the inquiry.

**CHAIRMAN**—Thank you very much for coming along and giving us your time. Just check with *Hansard* before you go. You will get a copy of the transcript of the evidence this morning. Thank you very much.

[11.46 a.m.]

**COLLINS, Mr John James, 16 Swayfield Road, Mt Waverley, Victoria 3149**

**CHAIRMAN**—On behalf of the subcommittee, I welcome you to the hearing this morning. In what capacity do you appear before the subcommittee?

**Mr Collins**—I am a private citizen. I am the treasurer of the Prisoner of War Association. I spent the last leave with the *Sydney* in Fremantle before going overseas. I think I was the last chap to send a message to the *Sydney*. I was very friendly with the chaps and I wanted to see that something was done about what happened.

**CHAIRMAN**—What ship were you posted to after that?

**Mr Collins**—I was going overseas with the AIF. I was on the *Zealandia* and the *Sydney* picked us up somewhere outside Adelaide and took us across the Bight into Fremantle.

**CHAIRMAN**—You were in the 8th Division?

**Mr Collins**—I was in the 8th Division—signals 8 Aus. Div. One of the blokes on the *Sydney* was a chap I went to school with and we had a good leave in Fremantle and Perth together before we sailed. Do you want me to tell you what happened on that?

**CHAIRMAN**—I just wondered whether you were Navy or Army. From what you said, I thought you might have been part of the *Sydney* crew.

**Mr Collins**—No, I was not; I was a sig in the army.

**CHAIRMAN**—Do you wish to make an introductory statement? We have received your submission and it has been accepted for publication.

**Mr Collins**—We spent leave together. When we set sail, the *Sydney* took up a position on our port side. I have a very clear memory of all this. It was about 150 yards away and it was playing martial music, marching songs. My sergeant, a chap named Bill Vaughan, who died while we were prisoners of war, gave me what is known as a Lucas lamp.

I sent a message to the *Sydney* to play the Beer Barrel Polka, which was a popular tune at the time. And sure enough, they played it. Only a few minutes later, alarm bells started ringing and we were instructed to put on our greatcoats and fill our water bottles. I am not sure whether or not we had to pick up iron rations, but there was a submarine in the area. With that, the *Sydney* took off at full speed. The boat we were on was the *Zealandia*, which was a pretty slow boat, and the *Sydney* had slowed right down to keep

pace with it. The *Sydney* took off at full pelt in a north westerly direction, and we were on our own. I want to stress this point, because I have heard different versions of it. For a day and a half or two days, the *Zealandia* was on her own in the Indian Ocean. She was then picked up somewhere near the Sunda Strait by HMS *Durban*, a British cruiser.

I have spoken to four of our chaps who are still alive and the time that we were on our own varies between 1½ to two days. Without exception, they all agreed on that. I understand the *Durban*'s log says that she picked us up when the *Sydney* left us, but that is not right. There is something false there somewhere. I want to be very careful with what I am saying, because I am positive about that. All the other chaps who are still alive will tell you the same thing.

We went to Singapore. We were in Malaya for a time and then the Japanese came into the war. We fought down the peninsula and on Singapore. Eventually, we were captured, sent to Changi for a while and then sent to Burma. We were in a place called Victoria Point in Burma, prior to going to the Burma-Siam railway line to build it.

**CHAIRMAN**—Did you go up the western side of the Malay peninsula to Victoria Point?

**Mr Collins**—Yes, that is right. We were on a boat called the *Toyohashi Maru*. I spent most of my time with the 2nd/4th machine gun battalion. We were at Victoria Point enlarging an aerodrome there. At one stage, I was given a job with three other chaps carrying water to the Japanese officers. I was only young; I was 18 or 19 at the time.

One of the Japanese officers, a *chui*, a Japanese lieutenant—he seemed to be a pretty bigwig there; I think he was in the intelligence forces—started telling us the different news of what was going on at the time. We had no official way of getting news. We did have a radio going but it was *sub rosa*, and that was not allowable. He started telling us how great the Japanese were and all the things that they were winning. He told us how they were cleaning up the Australians in New Guinea and what was going on.

He had been educated in California, maybe Los Angeles, I am not sure, but he spoke perfect English. He spoke with an American accent; he was a pretty bright sort of a bloke. He was boasting about all the things that the Japanese had done. One of the things that he boasted about was the fact that they had sunk the *Sydney*. His words were, 'Of course, we got the *Sydney*'. That did not go over very well with us at the time. But three years later, when we got out of captivity and came back, that had stuck in my mind. I have queried it for quite a long time, but could not get anything done. I could never find out what happened. I have spent a lot of time making phone calls to people in Geraldton, Western Australia, trying to find out, because I felt I had a responsibility to the chaps that I was friendly with on the *Sydney*, that I had spent so much time with only two or three days before they were sunk.

I was an accountant with my own practice in Melbourne. I was the treasurer of the Prisoner of War Association and different associations. I was Weary Dunlop's treasurer while he was president. We always thought that something should have been done because what we were told happened was not right. That, apart from what I have written in my submission, is about it.

**CHAIRMAN**—Did you ever find any corroborating evidence for the claim of that Japanese officer?

**Mr Collins**—No. I have read a lot of things about it. I have read how the Japanese had the best torpedo during the war—the long lance torpedo. There is evidence on that. I have heard people say, without corroborating it, that they were able to fire under the *Kormoran* and get the *Sydney*. There is no doubt that they did have the best torpedoes. There is plenty of evidence of that around. But no, I have no corroborating evidence at all for what that chap said. He seemed to be a pretty astute sort of person and he seemed to be definite in what he was saying.

They have done other things. There is a book published. What I am about to say now is what people may think. There is a book called *Op.JB* by a fellow called Creighton. Among other things it refers to a Dutch submarine, *K-XVII*, that was sunk on the orders of Winston Churchill and Roosevelt. It had tracked the Japanese fleet leaving Kure to go down and attack Pearl Harbour. Creighton was a protege of Winston Churchill and he was given authority by Churchill and Mountbatten to publish this after their deaths. The reason why it was kept quiet was that if the Japanese had found out that they had been sighted, they were liable to turn around and not go on with the attack. However, the British wanted America into the war.

This is an hypothesis. If the Japanese did sink the *Sydney*—and remember, that was before the Japanese came into the war—the same thing would apply. It would be hushed up. That book is available and it is an interesting read. Simon and Schuster publish it and they say they have no reason to disbelieve what is in it. There is a lot of other stuff in it but that is one of the things that is in it.

**CHAIRMAN**—All the evidence that the committee has exonerates the Japanese from involvement at that time because of the known number of submarines they had and the disposition of them in that November period.

**Mr Collins**—They say the Japanese submarine *RO333* was around the Darwin area at that time, which is not that far away from there. The Japanese have written that themselves.

**CHAIRMAN**—Was that the one that was sunk up there in December?

**Mr Collins**—I think that is right.

**Senator SANDY MACDONALD**—Can you recall what other things this Japanese intelligence officer told you?

**Mr Collins**—He told us that they had trapped the Americans on Guadalcanal, that they were cleaning up the Australians in New Guinea—this would have been about July-August 1942—and that the Japanese navy had large victories over the American navy. They were the things he told us. You must remember, we had no knowledge of anything apart from what he was telling us.

**Senator SANDY MACDONALD**—But nothing outrageous like they were on the Australian mainland or anything like that?

**Mr Collins**—On the Australian mainland?

**Senator SANDY MACDONALD**—Yes.

**Mr Collins**—No, he never said anything about that. He gave us to understand that eventually Australia would be invaded by their troops but he did not say that they had invaded, no.

**Senator SANDY MACDONALD**—How many troops did the *Zealandia* have on it?

**Mr Collins**—There was our unit, 66 of us. We were a special signals section. There were three or four other units of about the same size. I would have said—and this is more of a guess than anything else—probably about 1,500.

**Senator SANDY MACDONALD**—And your evidence is that HMS *Durban* met you—

**Mr Collins**—Somewhere near Sunda Strait, that's right.

**Senator SANDY MACDONALD**—and *Sydney* was nowhere to be seen.

**Mr Collins**—She was nowhere to be seen. She had left us a day and a half or two days before. She left us, I believe, on the 17th and the *Durban* picked us up on the 19th. I think that is the day that the *Sydney* was sunk.

**CHAIRMAN**—Allegedly, yes.

**Senator SANDY MACDONALD**—Could you be sure she had left you?

**Mr Collins**—Who, the *Sydney*?

**Senator SANDY MACDONALD**—Yes.

**Mr Collins**—Certainly, I had been there watching her. I had what is known as a Lucas lamp to send messages to it, and I was very interested. I suppose I was a bit uncouth but I sent regards to Marty Miller. Marty Miller was a chap I went to school with and he was on there, and I sent a message, but I did not get any reply.

**CHAIRMAN**—He was probably in the brig!

**Mr Collins**—He could have been, yes.

**Senator SANDY MACDONALD**—Could that evidence be corroborated from the survivors of HMS *Durban*?

**Mr Collins**—Yes.

**Senator SANDY MACDONALD**—They would recall whether the *Sydney* had physically handed the *Zealandia* over to—

**Mr Collins**—*Sydney* did not hand the *Zealandia* over to *Durban*, *Durban* picked us up near Sunda Strait a couple of days later, and there are plenty of our chaps still alive who can corroborate that. They are the chaps in my particular unit, but there were other units on board. I have never spoken to any of them.

**CHAIRMAN**—It might be in the log of the *Durban*, too.

**Mr Collins**—Yes. I heard it was in the *Durban*'s log that she took over from the *Sydney* but if that is so then the *Durban*'s log has been falsified. I know that is a pretty serious statement, but that is what happened.

**Senator SANDY MACDONALD**—What do you think happened to the *Sydney*?

**Mr Collins**—I think the Japs got her. Captain Burnett was apparently a very good, sensible officer and he would not let his ship get into a situation where a Q ship could sink it, especially when they were looking for a Q ship in that area. I have read all the books on it, and there is a book by his son too. Captain Burnett was not the type of person who would do that.

**Senator SANDY MACDONALD**—Keeping in mind what I said earlier about victors writing history, do you believe that the evidence taken from the Germans was a concocted story with which they stuck through thick and thin, substantially to the end of their lives, bearing in mind that very few people actually would know?

**Mr Collins**—Did all of them stick to it? Wasn't there one chap who became a



padre or a chaplain later on and who gave different evidence to that?

**Senator SANDY MACDONALD**—I do not know that we have got evidence of that. I always make the point that there were very few people who actually would have known what was going on on the *Kormoran* because there might have been only five or six people on the bridge, I do not know.

**Mr Collins**—That's right, I agree with that.

**Senator SANDY MACDONALD**—Most people would be below at battle stations. I guess we shall never know.

I asked Mrs Craill this question. Do you have a view about a suitable memorial to the *Sydney* and some sort of process whereby those, like you, who lost a friend on *Sydney* could sign off, because it seems very unlikely that we will ever know the answer?

**Mr Collins**—We have discussed memorials, and I discussed them with Weary Dunlop. We in the 8th Division have a memorial scholarship which trains two Malaysian nurses every year, and this has been done since the war. We bring them out because they are short of nurses up there.

It is very nice to put a monolith up, but I do not know what good that does. If you had something like a program or a scholarship to train people, my own wish would be Chinese people, because while we were prisoners the Chinese were marvellous to us, they were wonderful people that we struck, and considering what they put up with from the Japanese. I would like to see something done like that, that each year we would train some to be doctors or nurses and send them back to their own country, and call it the *Sydney* memorial. I think that is better than putting up a stone monolith that the pigeons rest on every now and then.

**Senator SANDY MACDONALD**—It just seems to me—and it is why I asked you—that there is an official naval monument at Bradleys Head for *Sydney* (I), but there does not seem to be an official naval monument to *Sydney* (II)—and she was the pride of the fleet at the time that she was sunk. I am not going overboard about monoliths. You are not keen on that?

**Mr Collins**—I am not particularly keen on that. I would rather see something that was effective, like what we do for the Malaysian nurses. I think that is very effective and it goes over well up in Malaysia. If you were going to spend money, I think if you did it for Chinese people somewhere or other because of how the Chinese helped us while we were prisoners, what risks they took and the terrible things that happened to them, then that would be something that would live forever with them, rather than a monolith somewhere, as you say.

**Senator SANDY MACDONALD**—Thank you.

**Senator MARGETTS**—Mr Collins, evidence we received in Perth indicated that there has been research done in Japan, both with archives and speaking to senior Japanese military personnel, and the witnesses giving evidence were incredulous that there could be any information about a Japanese sinking that they had not been able to glean from that level of research. Do you have any comment on why a person could not get the least inkling of such a thing in Japan if, as you say, an officer was boasting about it in a prisoner of war camp?

**Mr Collins**—No; but knowing the Japanese, as I do, they are pretty shrewd people and they would not want to. I have all the submissions here. There is a submission—I do not know the number of it now; I would need to look through them for it—of a gentleman who went over with BCOF and went to the Kure training area, which was analogous with Annapolis or with Jervis Bay in Australia. When he was looking through the place straight after the war he noticed a mural in this large room. One of the murals, the large mural, showed a Japanese submarine sinking an Australian cruiser. He queried it with the admiral in charge who looked at him—and I can imagine the way he would look at him—and said nothing. The next day he came back and it had been taken off the wall. I think that was submission No. 45. I have read all the submissions but—

**CHAIRMAN**—I remember reading that one.

**Mr Collins**—That seems to me typical—typical of the Japanese anyway.

**Senator MARGETTS**—If there was a submarine reported in your area, can you think of whose submarine it could potentially have been?

**Mr Collins**—I do not know, but we were given the warning that there was a submarine in the area, to put our lifebelts on, to fill our water bottles and put greatcoats on. You must remember we were in the middle of the Indian Ocean, where it is very hot, so to put greatcoats on was, I presume, because they were worried that we would be sunk. It was a submarine warning.

**Senator MARGETTS**—Or the greatcoats, being of wool, were to stop burning—could it be something of that nature?

**Mr Collins**—Yes, it could have been, or the fact that you might be afloat on a carley float or something out in the ocean for some time. That was what happened to us.

**Senator MARGETTS**—What explanation can you give in relation to the landing party from the *Sydney* to the *Kormoran* if they were never close together?

**Mr Collins**—I cannot give any explanation of that. You would need to speak to

naval personnel about that. I am not well up in that area at all.

**Senator MARGETTS**—You say that evidence could be corroborated. Do you think there are people who would be willing to come forward to corroborate the evidence of the timing that you have mentioned?

**Mr Collins**—Yes. I have spoken to some of our chaps and they are all of the same opinion, although the time varies. Some say there was a day and a half and some say two days difference between the *Sydney* leaving us and the *Durban* picking us up.

**Senator MARGETTS**—The point that springs to mind and that was asked of people like John Doohan in the Perth hearing was: why would a Japanese submarine take that kind of risk if there was a much larger scenario and a much larger plan in relation to Pearl Harbour?

**Mr Collins**—I would need to think about that. Without going too deeply into it, I would think that the Japanese were preparing for war. If you read their history in relation to the war with Russia early in the century, they prepared for it a long time before they actually made an attack, such as they made in Pearl Harbour. They were part of the Axis—Germany, Italy and Japan—and there is no doubt, of course, that they would have met German ships in the different oceans. It could quite well have been that they met the *Kormoran*. You must remember that they are very devious people; they do not play the rules as we play the rules.

**Senator MARGETTS**—So it would not necessarily have been a planned action that you are suggesting? There was evidence given to the committee that the Japanese would definitely have known where HMAS *Sydney* was at the time. If that was the case, it would therefore be hard to say that it was by chance that a submarine encountered the *Sydney* at that location.

**Mr Collins**—That is supposition. I do not think I should comment on that.

**Senator MARGETTS**—Okay. Thank you very much.

**Mr Collins**—Who was that speaking?

**CHAIRMAN**—That was Senator Margetts in Perth. As there are no further questions, I would like to thank you very much for your evidence this morning.

**Mr Collins**—Thank you very much.

**Proceedings suspended from 12.13 p.m. to 1.20 p.m.**

**LOUREY, Mr Kevin, 11 Wilson Street, Surrey Hills, Victoria 3127**

**CHAIRMAN**—On behalf of the subcommittee, I welcome you to this inquiry.

**Mr Lourey**—For 20 years I lived on Christmas Island. During that time I became aware of a grave site which was popularly known and always referred to as the site of a survivor from HMAS *Sydney*.

**CHAIRMAN**—Thank you, Mr Lourey. We have received your statutory declaration. That is part of the submission by Mr McGowan who was here this morning. Would you like to make any additions or corrections to that declaration?

**Mr Lourey**—No, I do not think so.

**CHAIRMAN**—Would you like to make a short opening statement?

**Mr Lourey**—I went to Christmas Island to live permanently in April 1950. I was working for the British Phosphate Commissioners. I was there for four months prior to that when I went up from the Melbourne office. It was not thought then that I would become a permanent member of the staff. I went there and became a permanent resident and worked for the British Phosphate Commissioners from April 1950 onwards, and I was there until the end of 1969—nearly 20 years.

Very early on in my time there I was working in the area of what we called the old European cemetery. There was an unmarked grave there. I was told by a man called Jack Pettigrew that that was the grave of a body which was washed ashore in early 1942 and which was generally thought to have been the body of a survivor from the *Sydney*. Jack Pettigrew was actually there when the body came ashore, as was Captain Reg Smith, who was also on the island. Two other Asians told me subsequently that they were also there when the body came ashore. They indicated that they were aware that this was where that particular body had been buried. That grave site, up until the time I left in 1969, was kept—as was the whole cemetery—in quite reasonable condition.

**CHAIRMAN**—How many cemeteries are there on Christmas Island?

**Mr Lourey**—There are two what we call European cemeteries, but there is also a Malay cemetery and a Chinese cemetery.

**CHAIRMAN**—There are no grave sites outside the cemeteries that you are aware of.

**Mr Lourey**—Not that I am aware of, no.

**CHAIRMAN**—So we are talking about one of the two European cemeteries.

**Mr Lourey**—That is right, yes.

**CHAIRMAN**—Thank you. Go on, please.

**Mr Lourey**—The last burial in the old cemetery took place in October-November 1950. The management at the time decided that it was too difficult to bury any further people there and they established another cemetery a couple of miles away. That is basically my story.

**CHAIRMAN**—The European cemetery in which the unknown sailor is buried is quite clearly delineated even today.

**Mr Lourey**—I have not been there since 1969, but I assume that it would be.

**CHAIRMAN**—Did it have permanent headstones on it marking the grave sites?

**Mr Lourey**—The other graves had permanent headstones, yes, and they were kept in reasonable repair and condition.

**Senator SANDY MACDONALD**—You say that you believe that you would still be able to locate the site of the unmarked grave even today. You believe that you would be able to—

**Mr Lourey**—I believe I would, yes. But, of course, I guess the terrain may have changed quite a lot in the nearly 30 years since I have been there.

**Senator SANDY MACDONALD**—Do you know of anybody else who claims to know the exact location of the grave?

**Mr Lourey**—I have a friend, with whom I am still in contact, who was on the island for the first two years that I was there. He lives in Perth, and he remembers the site of this grave and he remembers the discussions that he had also with Jack Pettigrew.

**Senator SANDY MACDONALD**—And Mr Pettigrew is dead, is he?

**Mr Lourey**—He is, yes.

**Senator SANDY MACDONALD**—You conducted a survey in 1950.

**Mr Lourey**—That is right, yes.

**Senator SANDY MACDONALD**—That is of the European cemetery. Would there be any records of that survey in existence?

**Mr Lourey**—I would not really know. Up until the time I left there, there would have been. But I do not know where the British Phosphate Commissioners put their records when they ceased their operation on the island.

**Senator SANDY MACDONALD**—What was the nature of your survey?

**Mr Lourey**—Actually, I was not surveying the cemetery; I was working in the area. Just up beyond the cemetery was a house in which the island manager lived, and the water supply was not real good. I was doing a survey, the purpose of which was to establish a water reticulation system into that area. The work that I was doing in and around the cemetery was incidental to that.

**Senator SANDY MACDONALD**—What is the source of water on Christmas Island?

**Mr Lourey**—I guess it is rainfall, initially. It just enters the ground and there are springs coming out. It is ground water; it is quite fresh.

**Senator SANDY MACDONALD**—How many people live there?

**Mr Lourey**—When I was there, it was about 3,500.

**Senator SANDY MACDONALD**—Would there be fewer today?

**Mr Lourey**—I think probably there would be, but I would not know.

**Senator SANDY MACDONALD**—You state in your submission that when you first saw the grave it was marked with a wooden cross.

**Mr Lourey**—That is right, yes.

**Senator SANDY MACDONALD**—But there was no writing on it?

**Mr Lourey**—That is right.

**Senator SANDY MACDONALD**—Do you know what happened to the cross?

**Mr Lourey**—I do not know.

**Senator SANDY MACDONALD**—Do you support the exhumation of the body on Christmas Island?

**Mr Lourey**—I think it would be extremely interesting to have the body exhumed. I think it would certainly put to rest who the identity of the person buried there might be

and, for that reason, I would support it.

**Senator SANDY MACDONALD**—Thank you.

**CHAIRMAN**—You say in the statement that you make that:

Because of the geographical location of the grave site and the very high rainfall on Christmas Island I believe that it would be more likely that the grave would be obliterated by debris washing down the slope over the grave rather than by material covering the body being washed away.

Is the burial ground under a hillside or something?

**Mr Lourey**—With the terrain on Christmas Island, generally speaking, you have got a steep cliff and, apart from a few beaches—and there is one in Flying Fish Cove—there is a narrow plateau and that is generally flat, and then maybe a quarter of a mile in there you have got a very steep rise up to, say, a general elevation of about 1,000 feet. It is in a part of that plateau, generally speaking, in against that rising cliff face, where the cemetery is situated.

**CHAIRMAN**—Senator Margetts, have you got any questions?

**Senator MARGETTS**—Yes, I have. Mr Lourey, I gather Mr Pettigrew was present when the burial took place; is that right?

**Mr Lourey**—That is right, yes.

**Senator MARGETTS**—Another name was mentioned by people who had in-depth conversations with Mr Pettigrew over time. I think the name that was mentioned was David Powell. Is he the person you were referring to in Perth, or was that another person?

**Mr Lourey**—No. The only people that I have mentioned in my submission as having had discussions with them were Captain Reginald Smith; a Malay, Haji Dolman Bin Ebar; and a Chinese, Tong Chee.

**Senator MARGETTS**—Sorry. I meant the friend in Perth that you said had also—

**Mr Lourey**—I see. Brian O'Shannassy is his name.

**Senator MARGETTS**—Do you know David Powell?

**Mr Lourey**—Yes, I do know David Powell.

**Senator MARGETTS**—Does he have a different view, or do you have different views on where the grave is located?

**Mr Lourey**—Probably not. I have marked where I think the grave might have been, bearing in mind that I was marking it on a survey map that was not particularly detailed. I understand that David Powell has said that it is a little bit further to the north but generally in the same area that I have said it is in.

**Senator MARGETTS**—But presumably, between you two people—you with your knowledge of the area then, and someone like David, who currently probably knows the island better than just about anybody—and the modern technology, do you think there would be a fairly good chance of locating the grave?

**Mr Lourey**—I believe so, yes.

**Senator MARGETTS**—You said that they stopped using the old European cemetery behind the CI club because it was too full. Do you know roughly how many grave sites there were at that location?

**Mr Lourey**—No. I do not know definitely, but I would guess about 12 to 16.

**Senator MARGETTS**—I am wondering what the potential would be for interfering with the wrong grave site.

**Mr Lourey**—I do not think there would be much potential at all. We could pinpoint it reasonably accurately.

**Senator MARGETTS**—We have had a photograph submitted to the committee which showed what some people thought might have been a boulder from a rock fall. Other people considered that it was a natural formation—as we know, there are many of those on Christmas Island—that was exposed in that area, indicating that it might actually be covering grave sites. Do you know of that location, and is it your opinion that that is relevant?

**Mr Lourey**—I do. I know that map. That is one of the maps that I consider as not particularly explicit in what is really there. The map that I have seen seems to show the fairly large boulder as a separate, independent boulder. In the area just behind the cemetery and to that side, that boulder could be it, I agree.

**Senator MARGETTS**—Is it your opinion that that was something that has always been there, or something that has fallen down more recently?

**Mr Lourey**—I would not know whether it has fallen down. It certainly was not there. If it was something that has fallen down recently, it must have happened after late 1969.

**Senator MARGETTS**—I believe that at various times the old cemetery has been



overgrown and restricted in access, and that it has been cleared a bit more of late but is still restricted in access. So it will depend on how recently they have been in and how clear it is, as to how easy it is to find what is there.

**Mr Lourey**—That would be right.

**Senator MARGETTS**—I asked the pathologist this earlier; but, from your knowledge of the work of nematodes on Christmas Island, have you had any experience of the impact of those worms underground on a corpse?

**Mr Lourey**—No, I have not.

**Senator MARGETTS**—That is all I would like to ask. Thank you very much.

**CHAIRMAN**—When you were there, was there any visual indication of the grave site other than the cross? Was there a mound?

**Mr Lourey**—There was a mound. There was quite a distinct mound, and it was quite clearly something that anybody walking on to the site could identify as a grave site. It was kept that way by the gardeners and park keepers that were employed by the Phosphate Commission to keep the place reasonably tidy.

**CHAIRMAN**—Was there acceptance by the resident community that that was the grave site, and was there no ambiguity about it?

**Mr Lourey**—That is right.

**CHAIRMAN**—What you are really telling the committee is that there is a high probability that we would identify the correct site if we chose to proceed with that.

**Mr Lourey**—Yes, I believe so.

**CHAIRMAN**—Thank you very much.

**Senator SANDY MACDONALD**—Were you here when Dr Ranson gave his evidence this morning?

**Mr Lourey**—No, I was not.

**Senator SANDY MACDONALD**—He talked about the survivability of skeletal remains and soft tissue. He said they would be more likely to survive if the site was sandy soil but well drained, which would take moisture away from the body. Do you have a view about the sort of soil or the drainage at the site?

**Mr Lourey**—I think it would drain quite well.

**Senator SANDY MACDONALD**—Is it a sandy soil?

**Mr Lourey**—Yes, it is fairly sandy.

**Senator SANDY MACDONALD**—Does it grow tropical vegetation in abundance?

**Mr Lourey**—Yes, that is right.

**Senator SANDY MACDONALD**—There was a question that the body, in fact, because it had been at sea for three months or so, was of a peculiar shape, a sitting shape. There was some speculation—and, in fact, we have had some evidence—that the coffin had to be specially made for the body.

**Mr Lourey**—I have not heard that said. Certainly the people who told me about it never said that to me.

**Senator SANDY MACDONALD**—Was Captain Smith there when the body was buried?

**Mr Lourey**—Yes, he was. He actually went out in the barge to pick up the body.

**Senator SANDY MACDONALD**—Thank you.

**CHAIRMAN**—As there are no further questions, thank you very much for your attendance today, Mr Lourey. You will be sent a transcript of the evidence you have given, to which you can make corrections to grammar in due course. Thank you very much for coming along this afternoon. My intention at the end of hearing the next two witnesses is to open a public forum for 10 or 15 minutes for any members of the audience that wish to make contributions to the subject and are not listed as witnesses.

[1.36 p.m.]

**BYE, Dr John Arthur Tristram, Reader in Oceanography, School of Earth Sciences, Flinders University, GPO Box 2100, South Australia 5001**

**PAGE, Mrs Rosslyn Ann, 24 Leabrook Drive, Rostrevor, South Australia 5073**

**CHAIRMAN**—Welcome. We have received your submission, Mrs Page, which has been authorised for publication. Additional papers from you and Dr Bye have also been accepted as exhibits to the inquiry. Would you like to make any additions or corrections to the submissions you have already made?

**Mrs Page**—Yes. I appear before the committee as a private researcher. There are two additions to my submission, No. 59, and that is the addition of the requisitioned vessel *Buffalo*, which was sunk on 4 April 1941 in Singapore Harbour. That has been deleted or not even included in the Department of Defence submission. Also, I accept that the *Prins van Oranje* sank on 12 January 1942 off Tarakan. I accidentally left that one out of my submission. They are the only two additions to my particular submission. Nothing else in this context changes.

**Dr Bye**—I have one further exhibit that I would like to submit. The work for my submission was carried out whilst I was at the university, and so it can be regarded as community service, Mr Chairman.

**CHAIRMAN**—Thank you. Do you wish to speak to that exhibit?

**Dr Bye**—By way of opening remarks, I would like to say that I now have four exhibits before you. Two of them concern the location of the position of the ships, although each of those is separate. The two latter ones, including the one just submitted, are to do with the carley float on Christmas Island. The secretary has very kindly allowed me to use the overhead projector to help in presenting this material. With your permission, I would like to go through the first two items very briefly. I am making a summary of the exhibits that you have.

*Overhead transparencies were then shown—*

The first one, as you can see, was conducted with my colleague, Dr Roland Byron-Scott. We were trying to address whether, if there was any reliable information on the sun—that is, the time of sunset, or any solar bearings—that could provide another means of locating where the ships might be. The results of that study are shown here in a short technical report. The abstract of the report is fairly brief.

The first thing to note is that, as far as I can ascertain from talking with people, there is no hard evidence of the exact time of sunset reported anywhere in the

interrogations from the *Kormoran* or from any other source. But there is a very interesting piece of information which is written in Detmers's report, and this is that the *Kormoran* sailed into the bearing of 250 degrees, which was directly in line with the sun. He chose to do this on purpose, to provide camouflage.

One can work back and see where that bearing was on 19 November 1941. These calculations are probably pretty reliable because they are all based on astronomical and magnetic data. The interesting thing was, although it is not stated in the report, that this bearing of 250 degrees would have to be interpreted as a magnetic bearing. If it was the ordinary geographic bearing, it would not have put the ships anywhere near where they were supposed to be. They could have been on the shore of Western Australia, but certainly not anywhere near where they should be.

You can summarise all of this information on a little chart. This shows the sort of precision that you can get. There are two sets of lines: the solid lines show the sunset time on 19 November 1941. You can see that the red dot, which is the official position of the battle, lies very close to 19.07 being the time. This is in Western Australian time. If we knew the sunset within a minute or two, it would be very helpful in locating the position. As I said, unfortunately I do not think this is known.

The second piece of information, which I found quite remarkable when we did the calculations, was that the reported bearing of 250 degrees for the direction in which the sun was setting is very close to the reconstruction of it. In fact, for the official position, so to speak, we have 251 degrees. In my judgment, this is probably not significant. It is very close—sufficiently close to say that there is nothing inconsistent in the report on the position. You can see that 250 actually lies closer to the shore of Western Australia, but one has to use one's own judgment to say whether that has any importance. That, basically, is the story on the first report.

I will make one little interesting comment: the navigator on the *Kormoran* was, according to the book written by Detmers, actually making a nautical almanac for 1942 at the time. In other words, navigation was a very strong point in their work.

**CHAIRMAN**—Could we ask a few questions on that point? I cannot fly an aeroplane to within one degree of a heading—it does not matter how much I concentrate—and I doubt very much that a ship at sea can precisely hold to within one degree of tolerance; you might average out on track, but you are going to wander a bit. There is a plausible explanation, because the evidence is suggesting that the site of the battle was closer to land than Detmers claimed. I am not discounting that at all.

The other point is that, if the ship was steering 250 degrees, I thought from memory—but I would have to go back and check this—that the wind was from the south-west, in which case they may well have been laying off a bit to port to compensate for that wind drift—bearing in mind that presumably the ship's head was towards the setting

sun. How much confidence can you place in the heading of 250 degrees?

**Dr Bye**—The only thing I can add to that is that—again, this is in Detmers book—he says that after setting the course along 250 degrees he took no more heed of the position of the sun; so that what one believes is that this 250 degrees was, in fact, the bearing that the sun would have set.

**Senator SANDY MACDONALD**—Are you saying that the sun is setting from the west or from the north-west, there?

**Dr Bye**—He is sailing into the setting sun.

**Senator SANDY MACDONALD**—Excuse me for my lack of understanding but, on his evidence, when he saw the *Sydney*, he was not sailing at 250 but, when he turned around and sailed into the sun, it was at 250. Is that what you are saying?

**Dr Bye**—Yes.

**Senator SANDY MACDONALD**—And was the wind coming from the south-west or from the north-west?

**Dr Bye**—Maybe it was a more easterly component.

**Senator SANDY MACDONALD**—The only point that I do not understand there is this: on the basis of the degrees, 250 and 251, they are sailing to the north-west; yet he was sailing not to the north-west but to the west.

**Dr Bye**—What those lines are supposed to indicate is the actual direction that the sun was setting. He was not sailing along those lines. If you were at that position in the ocean, the sun would be setting at 251, and so on. That was the interpretation.

**Senator SANDY MACDONALD**—Sorry; I am with you now.

**Senator MARGETTS**—I am interested in the work you did on drift cards, Dr Bye.

**CHAIRMAN**—Hang on. We have got four papers here and we have got an overhead projector and we are just discussing the first of the four papers. We will come to the drift cards later.

**Senator MARGETTS**—That is the disadvantage of not having video links rather than having phone links.

**Dr Bye**—Could I add one more thing? This is not really from my exhibit but it is

actually in the submissions; I think it was in one by John Doohan in connection with locating the ships. This letter was written to him and is dated 14 March 1997. The second paragraph opens with the sentence:

The government does not propose to convene any inquiry on the sinking of HMAS *Sydney* unless compelling new evidence is presented as to the location of the *Sydney*.

I was wondering whether I could ask respectfully what this new evidence is that has enabled this inquiry to proceed?

**CHAIRMAN**—I am sorry; we cannot answer that. We do not know.

**Dr Bye**—It would be interesting to know what it was.

**CHAIRMAN**—I suspect that what happened was that, as a result of public interest in the jargon of the times, the decision was revisited. Probably you contributed to that directly or indirectly with your research.

**Dr Bye**—If I might move on to the second exhibit, this is the title page of that one. This is on the completely different subject. The title is 'Regional sound and light propagation during the sinking of HMAS *Sydney*'. This was stimulated by Glenys McDonald's work of interviewing people who claimed to have seen sound and light off the coast of Western Australia.

The scientific question is: if they did see light and hear sound, how far away could this have come from? This is a meteorological problem and I worked on it with my colleague Roland Byron-Scott. I will just briefly show you the results. The results to me were quite surprising, as I will show you in a moment. What I thought would probably happen—and I will show you why it did not in a minute or so—was that the sound could have come from a long distance away. This would have meant that it would have had to have gone very high into the atmosphere and been refracted down to where the people heard it. As you will see in a moment, this proved to be not meteorologically possible according to the evidence that I was able to find from climate data.

The conclusion was that the sound that these people heard came through a low level sound duct, namely up to about 1,500 metres from the surface, and this meant that it was of much closer origin even though the direction that they heard it was almost the same direction as the official battle site. It must have come from a much closer site. There is a suggestion where that might be at the bottom there. I will just show you the reasons behind this.

This is a picture of the atmosphere going all the way up to 80 kilometres through the stratosphere. You will notice that the V is the speed of sound, and you will see that it is actually greater and at higher levels than at the surface. If that occurs, what happens is

that a source can then have the sound refracted back and land a good distance away; in fact, a considerable distance away and this has been observed on some occasions. A good example of this is when a munitions ship blew up in Halifax harbour. I wanted to test whether this could have happened on 19 November, or so, 1941.

The second picture shows the corresponding situation for light. If you see light from a distance, you often see it reflected off the bottom of a cloud layer, as shown in that picture. The height of the cloud layer determines how far you can see the light from it. These tests were carried out.

I just want to show you two more graphs here. If you look at the one on the right first of all, you will see that, for the actual sound on the occasion—the sound speed is up to 50 kilometres—it is less than at the surface. This meant that you could not have a long distance sound propagation from a distant source. If you look at the picture on the left which shows the winds corresponding to the situation obtained from the climatological evidence, you can see that there is a big switch in wind in direction at about one kilometre up. It goes from easterly over to westerly. This is what causes the low level sound duct.

Here are the results of the sound part of the investigation. These people who were listening near Port Gregory would have been subject to waves of sound that would have come in—as shown in those bands—because the sound can actually be reflected off the surface of the sea. If you had a source where that black dot is, you would actually get a first bounce, then a second bounce and a third bounce, and in between, you might not hear very much. This is a reconstruction as best as I could fit it to the information that was available in oral histories. I am not meaning it to be a very precise dot, but it does appear to be consistent sound wise with the source relatively close to the Western Australian coast. In this case, it is about 40 kilometres or so off the shore.

The calculation for the light was also consistent with the likely cloud. Again, I have not been able to unearth any actual observations of cloud at the time for 19 or 20 November, and so on, but the actual cloud heights would be consistent with reflective flashes being seen by these people too, if there was some sort of engagement at that position. One has to ask the question: what engagement was it? One does not have an answer to that, but it seems that there was something additional that went on there and it was validated by these observations. It was something which, according to them, continued for a length of time. It was not just a single event. It appeared to go on throughout the early evening and night on the day of either 19, 20 or 21 November—about that time. They were the conclusions from the second exhibit.

The third exhibit, which really in point of time was the first one, was what started my interest in the *Sydney*. In fact, it was stimulated by one of our students who originally became involved in this with John Heazlewood, I believe. We had very good fortune, and I would like to emphasise this. This was known as a piggy-back experiment. This is a technical term for a small experiment that was conducted by the *Franklin*, which is

Australia's main research vessel, which happened to be passing very close to the probable site of the loss of the *Sydney* at approximately the right time of the year. It was a little bit early; as you can see it was about a month earlier. We had a student on board the *Franklin*, which was undergoing a transit from Colombo to Fremantle. He took with him a thousand drift cards and released them from the ship.

I brought along some of these drift cards to show you. Mrs Page has the pristine cards before they were released. I have here about five of the cards that were subsequently found. You can actually see what the marine growth does to them. I might just show them to you. You can see the pristine cards here. As you can see, they were especially marked. The purpose of releasing them was, in fact, to find out where debris from the *Sydney* might have gone. After you do this, you have to wait a long time to see what happens. I will now show you what happened to these cards.

The recovery rate is about one in 100. So, essentially, we got about 10 cards back. The pattern that they followed was extremely straightforward. They went north to the Cocos Islands, or very close to Christmas Island. That was where the first card was found. The little figures there shows their speed in centimetres per second, so that 51 there is a very fast speed, about a knot.

Essentially, what happens is that the cards move northwards, travelling under the drift of the wind and in the current systems. Then they go to the west and go strongly across the Indian Ocean in the South Equatorial Current. A lot of them—five, in fact—reached Kenya and the Zanzibar area, and one reached Mauritius, as you can see, that one where 25 is against it, in the middle of the ocean there. Then they started to move south, down towards South Africa, reaching Natal.

This is a very unambiguous signal for what they would have done. None were found on the coast of Australia at all. In this connection, one then has to ask, 'What does this really imply about what might have happened to debris after the *Sydney* and the *Kormoran* sank?' I made just a few notes here, also taken from the exhibit, just to show you.

First of all, the timing was reasonably good, but the card actually took longer to arrive on the Cocos Islands than the carley float did to arrive at Christmas Island from the same launching point. This suggests to me one or two things. The first one is that the Cocos Islands are a little bit further and so you would expect it to be a bit longer.

The second thing—and this is one of the things with drift card experiments—is that it may have been lying on the shores of the Cocos Islands for a long time before it was actually found. This is evidenced by looking at these cards—some of them have been washed on the rocks. So the arrival time at the Cocos Islands would have been probably shorter than what is actually recorded. This is also supported by the fact that there is a very fast transit across to Kenya after that, indicating the same conclusion.



A little note at the bottom there says that very early on, in 1971, another drift card actually came through the site of the sinking and arrived on Christmas Island. This does not occur just in one year, as a fluke; I think it is more likely to be the general pattern. This is my feeling about this. So, it seemed to me that this is an experiment rather than a discussion of what might have happened. This is what actually did happen and I believe it is very relevant to the purpose of the inquiry.

**CHAIRMAN**—How many drift cards actually turned up on Christmas Island—one or two?

**Dr Bye**—Of this batch of 943, one was found on the Cocos islands.

**CHAIRMAN**—But you did not get a card on Christmas Island then?

**Dr Bye**—I have had one in the past, as shown in the second paragraph there.

**CHAIRMAN**—How representative would the drift cards be, as opposed to a carley float, which really does not draw much water but has a lot of windage?

**Dr Bye**—Probably the carley float, because of its windage, would travel slightly faster.

**CHAIRMAN**—Would it follow the same track?

**Dr Bye**—Yes, in general it would. There is a very good alignment between wind and current in this area.

**CHAIRMAN**—I see. This hypothesis would tend to discount the view that the battle scene was closer inshore, because if it was closer inshore it would have been the Leeuwin Current.

**Dr Bye**—I would tend to agree there, but we have not done a test at a close-in site to prove this. This, I think, would be my feeling, yes, but it is not proven.

**Senator MARGETTS**—My understanding is that the Leeuwin current is an interesting current. Someone suggested the *Kormoran* survivors were fairly widely dispersed and that there is potentially a fairly swift southerly likely to be blowing at that time of year. Would that not have been the case?

**Dr Bye**—This is a southerly wind, is it?

**Senator MARGETTS**—Yes.

**Dr Bye**—I think the winds were essentially from the south, yes.

**Senator MARGETTS**—Some people have put evidence to the committee that the wind could not possibly have blown in the direction of Christmas Island at that time of year. That does not seem to accord with your evidence.

**Dr Bye**—As far as I can see, the card that has arrived at the Cocos Islands demonstrated that the objects would be carried in that direction.

**Senator MARGETTS**—There was another card, was there not, at about the same latitude that did not actually reach Christmas Island? It did arrive in about three months. Is that right?

**Dr Bye**—This is the one at the Cocos Islands?

**Senator MARGETTS**—Is that the one?

**Dr Bye**—Yes.

**Senator MARGETTS**—I thought there was one further west. I am probably mistaken.

**Dr Bye**—Then they went off west after that.

**Senator MARGETTS**—That's fine. With the experiment in 1971 where a card was found on Dolly Beach, was that your experiment as well?

**Dr Bye**—Yes.

**Senator MARGETTS**—Where were the drift cards released from for that?

**Dr Bye**—That one was released at 40 degrees south, 111 degrees east.

**Senator MARGETTS**—And the *Franklin*, the one in 1994?

**Dr Bye**—The 1994 ones were released at approximately the site of the sinking.

**Senator MARGETTS**—Of the reported sinking?

**Dr Bye**—Yes, the reported sinking.

**Senator MARGETTS**—Have there yet been any drift card experiments from the Port Gregory site?

**Dr Bye**—No. We would like to conduct some but we have not done so yet.

**Senator MARGETTS**—What would be required? Is there much that is necessary, apart from the cards? What is required to do that kind of experiment?

**Dr Bye**—It is very easy, actually. May I tell you how much it costs to do this experiment?

**Senator MARGETTS**—Certainly.

**Dr Bye**—It is \$400.

**Senator MARGETTS**—Right. You have not conducted an experiment from the Port Gregory site. What is your general feeling about whether it was possible for the carley float to have gone from the Port Gregory site to Christmas Island?

**Dr Bye**—The Port Gregory site is not absolutely certain, is it?

**Senator MARGETTS**—Nothing is certain in this inquiry.

**Dr Bye**—If you put it very close in then there would be much more chance of the cards coming onto the coast of Western Australia. But if you were to put it maybe 100 kilometres out, or 50 kilometres out, the chances of it going north would be increased. That is all that one can say.

**Senator MARGETTS**—So you are saying that with your modelling in relation to sound, it could potentially have been as far as 50 kilometres out. Is that correct?

**Dr Bye**—I would not like to say—

**Senator MARGETTS**—Or not beyond 50 kilometres—is that perhaps more correct?

**Dr Bye**—Yes, that is right. About that distance appears to be the probable position.

**Senator MARGETTS**—Can I take it that nothing you have said so far would wipe out the possibility of the location of the sinking of the HMAS *Sydney* necessarily being off the Port Gregory site? It has not been proved or disproved in your opinion, is that right?

**Dr Bye**—As far as I can see it is quite possible that both could have been true. Perhaps the battle occurred near the official site and then the *Sydney* subsequently came closer to Western Australia. One does not know.

**Senator MARGETTS**—And of course one would not know necessarily at what stage a carley float would have been launched, I suppose.

**Dr Bye**—That is true.

**Senator MARGETTS**—Thank you very much.

**Dr Bye**—The overhead I am showing now, dated March of this year, was stimulated by the other side of the coin: is it possible to exclude other sources for the carley float at Christmas Island? John Heazlewood was interested in my making this assessment and so was Mrs Page. The very simple results of the findings for the Department of Defence submission. I think 21 ships other than HMAS *Sydney* were listed as being sunk in the region and so each of these could be considered as a possible source of a carley float at Christmas Island. The basis of checking this was to measure the distance between the sinking and Christmas Island and the length of time that an object would have had to make the transit. This immediately rules out quite a lot because the speeds become so great that it could not possibly have occurred.

Mrs Page, as she will tell you, did an enormous amount of research which found a further 107 ships—and these were also checked. The overall conclusion is that none of these ships was likely to have been the one—a negative conclusion was reached on all these ships. This is the sort of information that one can use in this study. I have some surface current atlases for the ASEAN region and Christmas Island is marked with a red dot. There is quite good information. Every two months is a current pattern; it reverses with the monsoon. But to the south, along the shore of Australia, you can actually see a strong stream in nearly all these patterns coming up from the south. That was the information that I used. You can see the reversal of the monsoon in the Java Sea.

Based on this information it is possible to look at each ship in turn and come to a conclusion. A table was produced and you can see roughly the average speed in knots that the material would have had to travel at to have arrived at Christmas Island on time. You can see some of them are enormous speeds, like an average speed of 2½ knots. This is much greater than is possible. You really need something much below that. From the *Sydney* it was about half a knot. All the other ones essentially were greater than this, usually much greater. I have the Department of Defence list of ships.

You can add some comments on this; also, in some cases, opposing currents would have been met by the objects so they would not have come through in any case. This is the full table for the Department of Defence ships. None of them seems to me likely; I can say that fairly strongly, I think. You will notice that one there, the *Eidsvold*, did not require any average speed because it actually grounded on Christmas Island—in other words, there was no possibility of that one providing the carley float. That is my conclusion, Mr Chairman. It is negative with regard to these other sources.

**CHAIRMAN**—Mrs Page, you have obviously put an enormous amount of work into this. How do you cope with the proposition that the carley float might not have come off a sunk ship but might have been washed overboard in bad weather because bad

weather does occur at sea and carley floats were not restrained the way lifeboats were? They were often designed to float off in bad weather and it is conceivable that—

**Mrs Page**—Yes, but from which ship and which seaman or sailor was lost?

**CHAIRMAN**—You could have had a sailor trying to restrain it in bad weather and it washed over.

**Mrs Page**—That is a hypothetical, and I doubt whether he would be wearing shoes made by the RAN contractor and it would be in a naval carley float.

**CHAIRMAN**—Naval carley floats were used on some merchant ships.

**Mrs Page**—They were used on the requisitioned merchant vessels, I would agree. It would depend on the date of requisitioning. Several of the requisitioned ships were pressed into service on 18 December 1941 and sunk shortly thereafter, so I doubt whether they had time to be surveyed and fitted out with carley floats. I would agree that the earlier ships could possibly have had carley floats, and probably did. But the equations that have come up are that no debris from them could have been the origin of the Christmas Island carley float. That is scientific; it is not me saying it, it is science saying it.

**CHAIRMAN**—A lot of those ships that were used for the convoying of the 6th, the 7th and the 8th Divisions were fitted out in Australia, because they were carrying two or three times their civil passenger complement in service personnel, and a lot of those would have had lifesaving equipment added on in an Australian port. Presumably that could have been of Australian manufacture and one of those could have been washed overboard.

**Mrs Page**—Troopships, I would agree, would have carley floats, but they then became property of the navy. They were HMAT—Her Majesty's Australian Troopship. They would very likely have had their standard lifesaving equipment that they had before they were requisitioned by the Ministry of War Transport. They would then probably be fitted out with carley floats, if there was time. There were definitely carley floats aboard *Aquitania* and *Mauretania* and the *Queen* ships as troopships.

**CHAIRMAN**—I am just interested in how you can be so sure that this was not from—

**Mrs Page**—In a wartime situation, the merchant vessels had their standard lifesaving equipment but, at best, most of them were equipped with wooden rafts. They had 44-gallon drums in the corners—sometimes one in each corner, sometimes two in each corner; they were eight to 10 feet wide by eight to 10 feet in length, with sort of planking inside fitted out for the men to sometimes sit on. They were emergency rafts;

they were cheap, economical and easy to build, and most merchant ships had them. It was far cheaper to make them up out of next to nothing than it was to get access early in the war to RAN carley floats.

**CHAIRMAN**—I come back to the point that those troopships carried carley floats.

**Mrs Page**—Yes.

**CHAIRMAN**—Is your accounting system so precise that you can rule out any possibility of a carley float being washed off a troopship at some stage?

**Mrs Page**—Nobody is perfect, but I do not believe there were any carley floats lost from troopships. They would have to prove which troopship, where, before 6 February 1942.

**CHAIRMAN**—It is probably difficult to prove it one way or the other, but I think you would have to concede the possibility existed. Have you researched, therefore, the number of carley floats made in Australia in that period between 1938 or 1939 and 1941?

**Mrs Page**—No. I have gone by the information that was provided in *The Scientific Investigation of a Carley Float* by Professor Dudley Creagh, John Ashton and Cathy Challenor from the AWM.

**CHAIRMAN**—It just seemed to me that you have put so much work into chasing all this—

**Mrs Page**—There is no history of who really made carley floats in Australia. Previously, equipment like that would have been supplied by the big shipping yards overseas, in England and Scotland, that built the ships for the Australian Navy. In a wartime situation, I believe we had the capability to make them here. In terms of the wartime contracts, they have discovered three manufacturers during the war period, and those companies and those records now do not exist.

**CHAIRMAN**—There are no Commonwealth contract records as to so-and-so being awarded a contract for 500 or for 50 floats or something like that?

**Mrs Page**—The government gazettes and research that the AWM conducted show that there were three contractors or subcontractors. Because of the fact that those companies now do not exist and the records therefore do not exist, I cannot supply the numbers of carley floats which may have been made.

**CHAIRMAN**—Thank you.

**Senator MARGETTS**—You would support the exhumation of the remains of the

body on Christmas Island. What would be your purpose in doing so? What would you hope that that would achieve?

**Mrs Page**—I would hope that if there is correct forensic analysis, it could be established that that is the body of someone's relative up there. If not, by scientific analysis here, with the various experiments which have been done, I believe that he was from HMAS *Sydney*.

**Senator MARGETTS**—So it could be potentially established that he was from HMAS *Sydney*. What would you think would be the appropriate action by the government if that was able to be proved?

**Mrs Page**—If it was able to be proved, then they would have to go through a process of testing to see to whom that body is related—that is, with DNA testing and all of the forensic tests. I would like to see the body exhumed and testing done to prove, once and for all, that it did come from the *Sydney*. I am sorry, I have lost the thread of what I was saying.

**Senator MARGETTS**—That is all right. Some people are suggesting that all that is needed is to locate the HMAS *Sydney* and to have a ceremony at the site. I gather from what you are saying that you believe that is not sufficient. Could you give your reasons?

**Mrs Page**—Locating the *Sydney* is an exciting prospect and I would advocate that. It is not the be-all and end-all of HMAS *Sydney*. I think there needs to be a lot done with archival researches overseas in establishing the facts. As far as memorials or anything like that go, I am in favour of a living memorial, perhaps a scholarship in the name of HMAS *Sydney*, to remember it for a long time. That is what I am in favour of.

**Senator MARGETTS**—I have a more general question. You have your own fascination, as have many people around Australia, and indeed other parts of the world, with what happened. Why do you think it is important to know what actually happened?

**Mrs Page**—I believe in the accurate recording of our Australian history, and it is a process which develops over many years. Often what is said at the time is not necessarily 100 per cent accurate. There is a process called taxonomy in historiographical recording. Obviously, with what people were told 50 years or 100 years ago—it does apply right throughout history—over a period of time, when more is now known from the bigger picture, you will then get a far clearer view of what happened in a certain event and the reasons why. You are far removed from the feelings of the time and you are able to take in a much bigger, broader picture which includes the political and historical value of an event.

**Senator MARGETTS**—If you have been following the evidence that has been given so far, including the evidence from the hearing in Perth, it is a bit like a jigsaw.

There are some elements—bits that do not fit, some bits that seem to. Would you say that you have received new information or information that you had not heard before? Would you, as an individual who has been interested in this, feel there is the likelihood of us piecing together those pieces of jigsaw and finding what actually happened?

**Mrs Page**—I have not received new evidence, apart from Dr Bye's analysis of the ships that I researched. That is the only new evidence that I have received.

**Senator MARGETTS**—So you had heard the information before about the potential Japanese submarine?

**Mrs Page**—Yes, I have heard always about the Japanese submarine theory. Earlier on, someone was saying which one they were referring to—I-124 which was sunk on 18 January 1942 off Darwin. That was the one they were referring to.

The Japanese submarine theory has been around since the beginning. The late Doug Candish, who was a member of the troops going up on board *Zealandia*, wrote a book way back in the 1960s called *We Who Survived*. He reported the ship sighting a submarine the day before handover. Candish is now dead, but he obviously went on to Singapore, as the troops from *Zealandia* did.

I have also interviewed quite a few of the troops who were from the 8th Div. Ammo. Sub-Park Adelaide, and there is anecdotal evidence amongst those soldiers that they also sighted a sub and a Dutch flying boat coming out from Surabaya. So I respectfully request that the Australian government inquire into the positions of all allied submarines during the period 11 November 1941 until around about 19 November.

**Senator MARGETTS**—So you would be in favour of them doing some sort of process of elimination?

**Mrs Page**—Yes, I would, because Australia did not own submarines. We had none. There were Dutch submarines, there were American, there were British. I want to know where the Allied submarines were during that period, and their operational movements.

**Senator MARGETTS**—Any German submarines?

**Mrs Page**—German submarines supposedly were not entering into the Indian Ocean until January 1943.

**Senator MARGETTS**—Right. Were you here earlier today when the information was given from the former crew member of the *Zealandia*?

**Mrs Page**—Yes, I was.



**Senator MARGETTS**—Thank you very much.

**Mr PRICE**—What did you expect out of this subcommittee inquiry and what would you like to see the subcommittee recommend?

**Mrs Page**—I expect from this committee's inquiry a summary, or perhaps even a calling together of some of the major contributors before there is a final summary. I believe that we have been quite cogent and there is a cogent set of facts that very likely the body on Christmas Island was from *Sydney*—it could not have come from any other source. I also believe that there is a value in the oral history gathered between Geraldton, Kalbarri and Port Gregory. I am a great believer in oral history, so long as it is bounded by other evidence which substantiates it. I would like to see a search for *Sydney* and I would like to see a memorial to HMAS *Sydney*. I do believe that there are various aspects of the whole official history, as we are constantly told, which need to be changed. There are quite clear things coming out of this inquiry which say that it did not happen that way. I do believe our history ought to be taught, be looked at and be correct.

**CHAIRMAN**—Dr Bye, I have a few quick points to finish up. You said that very few drift cards are ever collected. Why is that so? The buoyancy of those things seems to be rather long term. Where do they go?

**Dr Bye**—The ocean is very big and there are not enough people searching the shores for them, especially on our shores, for example, where the density of population is very low. These cards last for a long time. I have had cards in another experiment that were released in 1969 and they are still being found today.

**Senator MARGETTS**—If I could add to that, I think you would have to relate it to the return rate on bird banding. I do not think that is particularly high either, and these things actually fly in a certain direction every year.

**CHAIRMAN**—Have you done any studies on marine growth on hulls or platforms?

**Dr Bye**—No, I have not.

**CHAIRMAN**—Have you considered the reports on marine growth on that float and tried to estimate how long it was in the water?

**Dr Bye**—No, I have not tried to do that. I would not regard myself as skilled in that. It needs more of a marine biologist, I would think. You can actually see quite a lot of growth on these—

**CHAIRMAN**—Yes, I noticed that on the ones you passed around. All the accounts say that the boilersuit worn by the corpse had faded to an almost white colour. If the

proposition is true that it came from *Sydney*, isn't that an extraordinarily fast fade rate in two or three months?

**Dr Bye**—Was the colour of these boilersuits originally not white but blue?

**CHAIRMAN**—Yes.

**Dr Bye**—Again, I do not know the story on that.

**CHAIRMAN**—Were you here this morning?

**Dr Bye**—Yes.

**CHAIRMAN**—I instanced the phone call I received earlier this week in Brisbane from a soldier of the 6th division about a convoy Y2 where an officer was lost overboard in the Indian Ocean. The rumour was, at the time, that a life raft was lost with him. On the figures you have given us today for this projected battle site and the passage there, would it be possible for a life raft to have been lost south of there and done a complete circuit and come back, bearing in mind that the date of this was 30 April 1940 and it was the early part of February 1942 that the raft was discovered at Christmas Island?

**Dr Bye**—Firstly, I would have to see the position where it was lost.

**CHAIRMAN**—My impression is that it was lost shortly after the convoy sailed from Albany, Fremantle or wherever it sailed from.

**Dr Bye**—That is a difficult question. You are saying that it was from April of the previous year?

**CHAIRMAN**—From 21 months earlier: 30 April 1940.

**Dr Bye**—I think it is unlikely. That is rather a vague statement, because probably a large object would be found more easily when it comes to shore. It may very well have made a circuit and come ashore in Africa or somewhere like that: one does not know.

**CHAIRMAN**—It is theoretically possible, since the current movement is broadly circular: it could have gone around.

**Dr Bye**—Albany is a bit tricky, because it could have gone the opposite way in the Southern Ocean. In fact, that is where the Leeuwin current probably would have taken it: towards South Australia, in fact.

**CHAIRMAN**—Yes; it depends on where that convoy Y2 was on the night of 30 April, from a release point of view.

**Mrs Page**—Which ship is this?

**CHAIRMAN**—I do not know the name of the ship, but it was in a convoy taking elements of the 6th Division from Australia to the Middle East, and this officer was lost overboard on the night of 30 April 1940. The convoy was Y2: that is all I know about it.

**Mrs Page**—Before anyone can really clearly state any results from that, you need to know the exact date and the position.

**CHAIRMAN**—We do know the exact date: 30 April 1940.

**Mrs Page**—And the position? The Indian Ocean is huge.

**CHAIRMAN**—I realise that very much, but I come back to the point of the negative approach you are taking to it. You are saying: ‘That raft could have come from nowhere but the *Sydney*.’ As a scientist, I look at it from the other point of view and I want to know what your proof is. I want the positive, not the negative.

**Mrs Page**—Yes; I am quite happy to do an experiment on your convoy, if you want.

**CHAIRMAN**—Okay; is there anything else you would like to tell the committee?

**Mrs Page**—Yes. One submission intrigued me, and that is a submission by Rtd. Lt. Commander Ronald Bagley; I think it is in volume 8. I checked out the background, and he was aboard HMAS *Barcoo*, which did relieve the *Celebes* in September 1945. HMAS *Barcoo* embarked the British naval prisoners of war, of the Japanese, from *Barcoo* on to HMS *Maidstone* on 23 and 24 September 1945. May I ask that the nominal rolls for the prisoners of war from the *Celebes* be obtained from British Archives and that the passenger manifest from HMS *Maidstone* be also accessed from British Archives?

There is a very tiny bit at the end of Ronald Bagley’s submission in which he states that he met a clergyman that had in his possession a RAN black shoe. He said he was from Christmas Island and he was clutching this one shoe all the way through the war. There was never a clergyman on Christmas Island; but, if you follow our oral history, you can see that Tom Cromwell was the Administrator, and the word ‘administrator’, you will remember, meant to minister as a clergyman. Tom Cromwell, the administrator, was captured by the Japanese. He was the official who held the inquest. He has possibly kept evidence of the carley float coming ashore at Christmas Island and has taken it with him and held it right through captivity. His very first question upon being released was: ‘To whom can I speak in authority, to hand in this RAN issue shoe to?’

Ronald Bagley remembers that the shoe was made by Harry McEvoy. Harry McEvoy was in Redfern, New South Wales, and was a supplier of shoes to the RAN. It

had the broad arrow inside and the sizing. I think it quite important to get the nominal rolls and particularly the passenger manifest for HMAS *Maidstone* on 23 and 24 September 1945, because the inquest was supposedly missing, destroyed on the island. I think what happened on Christmas Island was that the machinery and the Christmas Island Phosphate Commission paperwork were destroyed. The inquest probably came down to Fremantle with Captain Reg Smith, as attested to by his wife. File 612/231/446, which is actually mentioned in handwriting on the naval intelligence file AA1980/700 Shipping Intelligence Report 137/1942 that annotates 'This file has been destroyed—5th July 1980' is probably the file that did contain the inquest that did arrive in Fremantle.

**CHAIRMAN**—We will see if we can do that.

**Mrs Page**—Thank you.

**CHAIRMAN**—Anything else?

**Mrs Page**—No.

**CHAIRMAN**—Thank you very much for your attendance here this afternoon and for all the work you have put into your research programs.

I would now like to open up this hearing for 10 or 15 minutes for a general forum for members in the audience who have an interest in the subject. If anyone wishes to give evidence you are welcome to come to the table.

[2.41 p.m.]

**TAYLER, Lieutenant Commander Clive Ernest, 23 Finlay Street, Albert Park, Victoria 3206**

**Lt Cmdr Tayler**—I am a retired Lieutenant Commander, RANVR. I joined the navy in *Rushcutter* in 1940. I was immediately sent to Britain on loan to the Royal Navy—it was known as the yachtsman scheme there—and I served with the Royal Navy virtually for the rest of the war. At a later stage of my service I was first lieutenant of a submarine for a while. This leads me to talk about torpedos, to which we were very sensitive.

As a preamble, I want to mention some of the earlier evidence today, particular about the *Zealandia*, which I think was a troopship, and about so many people having seen a submarine. Submarines are pretty hard to see and it must have been a very negligent submarine to allow itself to be seen by a thing like a troopship; it would have been busy trying to sink it, I imagine. I would only believe that a submarine was in that particular area if the ship's officers had sighted it through their powerful binoculars and that sort of thing. Otherwise, in that type of ship, they always spread the word around to raise a dummy emergency and then carry out an exercise, such as ordering the troops to go to their stations and put on their clothes and fill the water bottles, if in fact there was something of some substance likely to happen in the future. It was a standard ploy.

The other thing I want to mention is in relation to talk about a Japanese submarine sinking the *Sydney*. One suggestion was that the Japanese had torpedos which would alter depth and come up again on the other side of an obstruction or something like that. That is the most highly unlikely thing I have ever heard. In any case, in 1941 one of the greatest problems we had with torpedoes was depth keeping. Two or three feet here or there would make all the difference in hitting your target. It was very difficult to keep them just at a standard depth, rather than order them to dive deep and then come up again. That just would not be on at all.

The thought of using the *Kormoran* to hide yourself behind and fire a torpedo at a ship on the other side of it takes a lot of thought. Normally when a submariner is trying to attack a ship, the first thing he wants to do is to be able to see it so he can fire his torpedoes in an absolutely accurate direction. Also, it is very hard to envisage how a Japanese submarine could have cooperated in any way with a German raider. Firstly, there could not be a coincidence. The submarine and the raider and the *Sydney* could not all turn up at the one place by accident, that is for sure; that is such a highly unlikely set of circumstances.

It would have required a lot of cooperation between the Germans and the Japanese to organise a submarine to appear with the *Kormoran*, and I would say that would be the most unwelcome thing the Japanese could ever offer the German or a submariner. Ships

like the *Kormoran* and submarines never worked together. They travel at different speeds. If the weather gets up, the submarine can make about five knots and *Kormoran* can make about 15 or something. It is just not on, anything like that, that they would just cruise around the ocean in company with each other in the likelihood that they would bump into a target like the *Sydney*. I think I have just about said enough about that. I believe that if that was ever to be successful, a Japanese liaison officer would have been necessary on board *Kormoran* just to get the communications right.

I will leave that subject now and go back in my war service to 1942, by which time I was in the North Atlantic as signals officer in an ex-American escort destroyer, a thing called HMS *Ripley*. As signals officer I had first access in the ship to information that used to come in via the mail—that is to say, the stuff that was not very urgent. We always got copies of the latest Admiralty fleet orders. This was stuff that went out to all the major war vessels, giving instructions and advice—well, mainly instructions, not advice; it was an Admiralty fleet order. It was to bring you up to date with what was happening and how you could conduct yourself in certain circumstances—it was for commanding officers, mainly.

There was one Admiralty fleet order—I cannot remember when precisely it came out—that gave instructions to commanding officers on how to carry out their business in the case of the apprehending of a suspect, a raider, something like that. It was obviously based on the *Sydney* experience and it was pretty explicit as to what you needed to do: as soon as you realised that you were in any great doubt at all, open fire on the target.

The other thing which was possibly more important was the thing called the weekly intelligence report that the Admiralty used to send to all major war vessels—and I think some of the smaller ones as well. It was a news report on what had been happening in the naval business around the world. Also, the objective of the thing was to be instructive, to let COs know what was going on. Although they were not actually instructions, they were advice and kept you up to date with all sorts of things.

For instance, I remember seeing one which said it thought the Japanese—the Japs were in the war by this time, of course—were not very good at night fighting. About one month later, another one came out which said, ‘Sorry about that, the Japanese are very good at night fighting’—as we found out to our cost.

I had to give it a bit of thought—it is a long while ago—but the WIRs were not secret documents; they were to be read by any of the officers of the ships. From memory, they were not actually accountable, so if they disappeared or anything it did not matter very much. After all, they could not have had a great security risk, simply because they were just reporting on incidents that had happened some time before. I did not join the ship until March 1942 and it was shortly after that that I opened up the mail and there was the weekly intelligence report and it described the Admiralty’s version of what happened between the *Sydney* and the *Kormoran*. I remember it being greatly traumatic reading for

me. I reacted very badly to it for a while. It was written in very blunt terms and seemed to be really a great slur on the way things had gone from the Australian point of view.

I have not read all the reports, submissions and things around here, but it strikes me it would not be a bad idea for the inquiry to get a copy of this and read it, because it would have been the freshest thing the Admiralty had. It would not have been subject to censorship or any long deliberation. I would say it was probably unadulterated. I am suggesting to the committee that you try to somehow locate a copy of it. I cannot believe it is locked away with documents for 2020, because it was in such general circulation. I know that plenty of people used to take one home with them. I daresay that that information would be available and I suggest to you that it might be worth having a look at. I thank you for listening to me.

**CHAIRMAN**—Thank you, Commander Tayler. We will do that.

[2.53 p.m.]

**LOUREY, Mr Kevin, 11 Wilson Street, Surrey Hills, Victoria 3127**

**Mr Lourey**—There is a statement I want to make. It is unrelated to what I said earlier. In 1941, before the Japanese came into the war, the British Phosphate Commissioner lost quite a few ships which were either sunk or captured by German raiders. One of those ships that I am aware of was a Norwegian ship which was actually evacuating women and children from Nauru and was, I think, sunk, but the people on it were taken off and some of those were civilians. They were put on board this German raider and I have been told by people who were on it that they were subsequently put ashore, I think at Kavieng, when they rendezvoused for supplies with Japanese ships up near the Caroline Islands. There was evidence of Japanese submarines being in the area then and cooperating with the Germans. That was before Japan entered the war, of course.

It is just a little bit of evidence that the Japanese were cooperating with the Germans at that particular time before they entered the war. It does not rule out the perhaps theoretical possibility that they may have cooperated with them further afield. I just thought that might have been interesting.

**CHAIRMAN**—Thank you very much.



[2.55 p.m.]

**COLLINS, Mr John James, 16 Swayfield Road, Mt Waverley, Victoria 3149**

**Mr Collins**—I was interested in what the commander had to say. First, never at any time did I say I saw a submarine. Second, the *Sydney* was equipped with asdic, I believe. It would have detected the submarine and it would have advised us. We were warned that there was a submarine in the area. There is plenty of evidence from the other survivors of the *Zealandia* to that event.

You did not have to be a genius when you were told over the air what to wear in case there was an attack. I have only got up to No. 33 in these submissions. Mrs Page has intimated to me that she has spoken to members of the ammunition sub-park who were on the *Zealandia*, and that they have more or less corroborated what I said, that there was a lapse of at least a day and a half to two days before the *Durban* took us over.

I think that is pertinent to this inquiry, because I think something is being hushed up. No matter what commanders, captains, or anyone else might say, we were there. I heard what was said—I was a sig—and there are many other people on that ship, the *Zealandia*, who are still alive today who can give that same evidence.

I do not know of anyone who saw the submarine, but I know we were warned there was one in the area, and that is when the *Sydney* took off. I would like to get a copy of the further submissions, if there is one available. I told Mrs Page that when she mentioned 11 November 1942 I think she meant 11 November 1941.

[2.55 p.m.]

**HEWITT, Mr Winston Frederick, Unit 6, 93 Glenhuntly Road, Elwood, Victoria 3184**

**Mr Hewitt**—I was a petty officer on the *Sydney*. I was captain of S1 gun. My friend, Gordon White, was HA director. There are several basic things that happen at sea. One is, as Mr Tayler said, about submarines. I will field that first. Submarines generally are beneath the water in daytime. It would be very difficult to pick up a periscope, which is all you would see. That is all over the world, and I am sure Mr Tayler will agree with what I am saying.

The other basic thing that I would like you to know about is the carley raft. It has got a rope that is looped around it so you could get into it. In every piece of rope in the navy there is a rogue yarn which will tell you where the rope was manufactured. I would imagine that that raft could be investigated and checked out. That would give an indication of where the carley float was built. Every time a ship comes into its home port, for example, Sydney, the carley rafts are systematically taken to a depot and buoyancy tested. There is a lot of information about those sorts of things.

The thing that I find very difficult to understand is the time between when the ship went down and the investigation made to find it. For example, the wooden decks of the ship, regardless of what you think, must have floated away if it was damaged. There was oregon timber in the racks, kept there so that should a ship get holed, it could be used to shore up the bulkheads. That must have floated around somewhere.

On all the sea boats or cutters, the lifeboats are just over the thwarts, the seats of the boat. So, if a ship went down, they would float away. It is inconceivable to any seaman that that would not happen.

The thing about *Sydney*'s position is this. After the action in the Mediterranean, the guns were worn out, and we went to Malta to have the main armament replaced. The situation with the war at the time meant that we could not get those guns replaced at all. So, right until it went down, those guns were never replaced. The four-inch guns, particularly, were worn out. I had personal experience of that. A calibrated graph is put on each gun so that, after a certain amount of firing, the adjustments are made. I know that with the four-inch gun it was right off the scale. They were as smooth as they could possibly be.

These things should be taken into full account when you consider what happened. That would give a good account of why the captain, in his wisdom, went closer than possibly the layman would see as right to do. But he would be thinking of how hard he could hit the enemy, and that would be his suggestion, I would think. There is no suggestion, in my opinion, that there is any such thing as cowardice on the part of the

captain: that is the most absurd statement that anybody could make.

The Japanese submarine that has been mentioned would not have the range to come that far south. After all, the areas between Japan and where the action took place were under Allied command, so where would the submarine refuel? That would not be possible. Thank you very much for your patience.

**CHAIRMAN**—Just before you go, since you were a gun captain, could I ask you a technical question? On the turrets of the *Sydney*, if the main power unit was disabled, was it possible mechanically to train those turrets?

**Mr Hewitt**—It depends on how damaged the training system was.

**CHAIRMAN**—But wasn't there an electric or a hydraulic system?

**Mr Hewitt**—There was a mechanical system, yes.

**CHAIRMAN**—But there was a mechanical fall-back position?

**Mr Hewitt**—Yes.

**CHAIRMAN**—Thank you. Does anyone else wish to make a statement? If not, I propose that we adjourn for 10 minutes and then we will reconvene for the evidence from Mr Lindsay Knight.

**Proceedings suspended from 3.02 p.m. to 3.19 p.m.**

**KNIGHT, Mr Lindsay Charles, 677 Lyne Street, Lavington, New South Wales 2641**

**CHAIRMAN**—I welcome Mr Lindsay Knight and I want to say what a pleasure it is to see such a distinguished Australian here today—somebody who taught me to shoot with a facility I have long since lost. Would you please state the capacity in which you appear before the committee?

**Mr Knight**—I am from Knight Industries, which is a family company, an exploration and research and development company.

**CHAIRMAN**—We have received your submission, which I read with great interest, and it was authorised for publication. Are there any additions or corrections you wish to make to that submission?

**Mr Knight**—Yes. I have a letter prepared with some of the corrections. We inadvertently had the wrong coordinates for the *Sydney* in the conclusion of our submission. I consider that an inexcusable mistake, so I request that we delete the 28, 38, 39 south and 113, 21, 86 east and substitute 29, 58, 53 south and 112, 48, 26 east, figures which coincide with the coordinates in the rest of the submission.

**CHAIRMAN**—Do you wish to make a short opening statement before we proceed to questions?

**Mr Knight**—I have some further information which I would like to submit. I have two letters from Mr Eric Krake and his brother, Eddie Krake, who were machine gunners on the big ship *Queen Elizabeth* from October 1941 until December—just before Christmas—1941. Our survey was reported in one of the Western Australian papers, and Mr Krake's son-in-law saw the report and mentioned it to Mr Krake, who got all excited and said he had something to add, which was that he and his brother were machine gunners on the *Queen Elizabeth* and they had their guns set up in the bridge area. At that time, they were privy to a lot of the discussions that were going on with the senior officers of the ship.

Mr Krake heard someone come up and give a report that there was a man overboard and ask what was to be done. The captain said, 'We cannot stop the ship, because we have 9,000 people on board. Throw a life raft overboard to him and, with a bit of luck, he may drift to one of the islands.' I am presenting that document on behalf of Mr Krake, and also a letter, from Mr Krake to his daughter and son-in-law, which adds a little more information and names his senior officers as Captain Mackie, Lieutenant Brandt, Sergeant Lawrence and also a petty officer of the *Queen Elizabeth*. He said that he did not know whether it was a serviceman that had gone overboard or a member of the merchant navy, but that somebody else on the ship must remember; in any case, it would have been recorded in the ship's log. I would like to submit that letter too, please.

**CHAIRMAN**—Thank you very much for that.

**Mr Knight**—After receiving this information, I thought it could be useful when determining the identity of the body and float washed up on Christmas Island.

**CHAIRMAN**—Would you like to speak in general terms to your submission, or do you want me to go straight into questions?

**Mr Knight**—Firstly, I would like to say something about the motivation for the search. As we have said in the submission, I have been developing this Knight Direct Location System—called KDLS—for some 10 years or more. I got involved in the oil business and as a result we had oil and gas leases in Western Australia. Years before that I wanted to test the viability of Mk4 KDLS to see whether I could locate the remains of an ancient ship which I was very interested in.

**CHAIRMAN**—Could I take you back. What was the origin of this? What was the idea you started with for the KDLS?

**Mr Knight**—I was the owner and inventor of a projectile detection system. In other words, I have been used to detecting energies. We were very successful with that. I sold it to 35 countries. That company then was stopped and I had the time to investigate other areas of energy detection. I started to develop a system whereby I could interrogate the natural frequencies of basically all materials—atoms and molecules of all sorts of minerals and elements. That went on for some time. I had a lot of success and a lot of failures until finally we are now up to Mk28, and it is very good. You can detect lots of different compounds and elements in all sorts of conditions.

One of the things that I wanted to do was to see how effective this would have been in trying to detect an old shipwreck, particularly on the signature of white oak. As a result of that I got the KDLS signature for white oak from the maritime museum in Fremantle and we flew out of Kalbarri with a Kalbarri air charter to see whether we could locate the *Batavia*. The pilot of the aircraft knew where the old ship was but that had nothing to do with me or Warren Whittaker. We did not know where it was—no idea at all. So we just flew off and it was not any time before I picked up the signature of some oak and got led to the position of the *Batavia*. It was quite exciting. We were coming up towards it and, all of a sudden, there it was. We could not see because everything is under the water and there are only bits left anyway because most of it has been taken away. But there was still enough left for me to get that signal.

**CHAIRMAN**—What height were you at?

**Mr Knight**—At that time we were between 4,000 and 5,000 feet. The captain of the plane was quite excited. He said, ‘That is exactly the position because I bring people out here as a tourist trip. You are right on top of it.’ He signed a statement to say that this

was so and gave me a testimonial.

Having done that I went to—excuse me I cannot think of the name of the department in Canberra, but it was to do with ancient ships—Canberra and I was talking to the man there and he said, ‘If you can do this, why don’t you look for the *Sydney*?’ I wanted to know why and he said, ‘Because it is a national monument, a war grave, and nobody knows where it is.’ I thought about that and, as it was off the coast of Western Australia, and I could do gun metal and copper and iron and a few other things at that time, I decided, ‘Let us fly on after passing the *Batavia* and see what we can find.’

We were restricted in 1988 because we were in a single engine aircraft and there were distance limitations but it was not too long before we picked up a signal. I knew that there was something out there but we had to turn around and come back. It took me something like 10 years to get the opportunity to go back again. In January 1988 we were doing aerial surveys over our oil lease and whilst up in that area I thought, ‘Now is the time.’ We were ready and we went out and did it again—only we went right out this time in a twin-engine aircraft. We had a general idea of where to go because of where we had been in 1988, only this time we went out to about 150 nm offshore.

We did tests on the way out, as it says in the submission, and we tested out on what we call C15, which is a fraction of bunker oil. The bunker oil we found was of Borneo origin, which has an aromatic base which is not that prominent in Australia: I use it quite a bit in the US. I have had experience with aromatic oil and experience with C15, so I decided I would look for the *Sydney* on those fractions of oil.

I realised that the tanks may have been breached and so on: we all know that that is very possible. But there would be some oil left in pipes or maybe tanks or trapped by air or whatever, and there should be enough for me to lock onto—which I did. Then, one of the most remarkable things was that, having got there—it was out quite a long way and we picked it up something like 72 nautical miles from the place where we finished up—it was what I call a single point target, just one area. Now, at that time, I was unaware of the depth of that target and I have since found out—we checked the charts when we came back—it is about 4,900 metres.

The cone of detection at that depth comes up, and you are travelling at something like 115 or so metres per second flying, and have also got a time delay from pushing buttons and so on. There was a very slight variation between position points every time we went around. We kept on going around and around. We were very well set up with GPS and we kept on going around. I kept on getting led back into the target and, as a result, I got signals on C15, aromatic, copper, steel in one section. I did not get oil in the other section, but I did get the copper, steel and so on in the other section, which suddenly led me to believe that we were dealing with two lots of targets or possibly a ship that had broken in half.

I hasten to add that whilst I had a good idea it was the *Sydney* I could not prove it. But all the different ingredients that we were getting on our detection were looking pretty good. We mapped all positions. I have since thought of a few more things we can do. Then, having located this signal area of great interest, we flew north and it was not any time before, probably 30 or 40 nautical miles up the track, we got more signals, only this time I got them on diesel oil, and then the usual copper, gun metal, metal and other things. I found that the metal targets were spread out quite a distance, in a basic north-east line, which was rather surprising, but we mapped them all and then did a few returns over the particular spots to make sure. This was KDLS site 2.

Then we went on further north and got another spot, also on diesel fuel and with the subsequent iron, copper and gun metal and so on. But this one seemed to have had more of an intense amplitude diesel signal. That led us to believe that we had three ships. Having done that, we analysed it all and decided that, with the information that we had picked up, the first one that we went to was the major target—and the equipment indicates a major target first; it is an amazing thing.

Re target 1: you can see that there are probably two targets, and I got an indication of that. There was also another target on our left which was further down south, but that could have been an oilfield, it could have been another ship, it could have been something else. We did not go further south. We just turned and went back up towards what we call the popular area and the Detmers area. That was when we got the three different ships. At that stage, I could not do much more, other than confirm that there were targets out there. I must say I was surprised that we got three targets. But when I am surveying with KDLS, I do not let the analytical mind get in the way. You write down what you get and then, having done that, you can analyse that at a later date. Otherwise everything goes wrong, as you well know. So we went back to Geraldton; we still had to do another flight over our north oil lease and, by this time, we were gathering our thoughts.

I talked with Glenys McDonald, who was in Geraldton. At that stage, I did not know Glenys very well but I knew she had done a lot of jolly good work with oral evidence. All of a sudden, we started putting two and two together and things started to add up. We had to go up north further in our lease on 31 January 1998. We finished that work and ended up at Denham and then decided to fly the north offshore area. Because so much work had been done on this north area I thought, 'There is something odd around here. We had better go and have a real good look.' So we flew all around the area where most people reckoned it was.

We went to the Detmers site and we went north of it and we went out further west, all over the place, and never got a signal. It was most peculiar: we never got a signal. I tested the machine to make sure everything was right—I have ways of doing that. I went through all those procedures, orientated myself in different directions, turned the plane around and all over the place trying to pick up something but I never picked up anything, whereas down south I never had to do that—the signals just came in on an automatic

basis.

We finished up back in Geraldton and mapped everything that we had got and then started to study all of the writings and so on. I am not really here today to enter into an academic argument as to what the currents did and what the winds did and so on. Warren Whittaker, my counterpart, is well into that and he is preparing a very detailed submission as a result of some severe criticism we have had from some of the people in Western Australia. He is putting that together and wishes to submit it.

I am basically here to say that we went and we got signals. How the targets got there is another story. But I do know that we got very powerful signals indicating that we had three vessels. It is possible that perhaps No. 2 position and No. 1 position, even though they are 30 nautical miles apart, may be bits that might have dropped off a ship, or whatever. I do not know. But it seems odd that they would be 30 nautical miles apart. After thinking about all this and going over all the detections that we had, I am happy with the idea that we got three different targets, three different vessels.

There are other things that we could do—quite a few things. I have thought about this since we have come back. I would like to fly it again. First of all I would like to fly the north area on a track. We have got some of our information on the Internet and we have been getting replies back from various ones who cannot understand why we did not get any signals up in the north search area, which is quite an extensive area. One man mapped out a track where a lot of people reckoned where the action took place, or where the ships could be, and there are about four or five different points along this track. Just to satisfy curiosity, I would like to fly that again, with the upgraded knowledge that we have, to make doubly sure.

There is another one that I would like to do in the southern area. I am now intrigued with a lot of the evidence and about evidence of other vessels or submarines or whatever that could have been in the area. Some time back, in 1988, when I was asked to have a look at the *Sydney*, I visited the War Memorial with the idea of testing out the KDLS resonance signatures of the Japanese submarine propellers. At that time I was mad keen on trying to locate the missing Japanese submarine up in the *Sydney* area. I spent a few days with an early model machine testing this out and I got signatures for it. In doing so I found that apparently the Japanese submarine propellers are a different alloy to the Admiralty specification or European type of propellers; there is a different ingredient. I did a lot of work to try and ascertain that, and I believe that is so.

What I would like—and I would like to put this formally to the committee—is that there be a direction given that I am allowed to get some filings off a Japanese propeller from the War Memorial—they have two lots. This does not mean defacing the propellers; it means just filing on the inside section, where it cannot be seen, and getting enough of the filings into my small containers, which I use for the heteronuclear lock of my detection system. Having got that, and then having got the signature for it, I would like to



fly those three targets again in the southern area to see if I can get a matching signal from one of those target areas, and then do the same with the imperial alloy props. I believe that could give us some more clues. I would like to do that.

I formally ask the committee that something be done to allow me to get those samples. You might think that you cannot have every Tom, Dick or Harry cutting pieces off the things at the War Memorial. I am aware of that. But I could take filings off those props so that nobody would know they had come from there. That is evidenced by when I was in Florida recently at Key West with Mel Fisher, one of the famous treasure hunters of the world who has located the *Atocha* and *Margarita* Spanish galleons, who has bronze cannons. We were able to get some filings from them and I used them with the resonance signature when I flew the area offshore of Key West, where the *Atocha* and *Margarita* are, and located about another 16 cannons. All the material fits into little bottles which are about half an inch long and about 10 millimetres in diameter. I would very much like to do that, if the committee wishes to continue with it.

**Mr PRICE**—What is the response of the War Memorial to that proposition?

**Mr Knight**—At this stage I do not wish to say anything.

**CHAIRMAN**—All right. We will see what we can do on that. But what is the point of looking for a Japanese propeller off the south-west coast of Western Australia? We have no evidence that there was a Japanese submarine sunk there—was there?

**Mr Knight**—I do not know. I would just like to see what response I could get, if any. I feel there is enough evidence floating around to justify that. What I am mystified about at the moment is why we have got three different sites and why I am not getting anything in the northern area. One could say that I did not know what I was doing, that the equipment would not detect it and so on. But the circumstances of detection do not change in a few miles.

**CHAIRMAN**—If we could just go back to basics for a moment, how does the KDLS system work? I have read your submission and you talk about electron spin resonance, but that does not help me terribly much. Can you just put in simple layman's terms how you are detecting foreign bodies?

**Mr Knight**—Everything has its own signature and everything has its own resonance frequency. That is known. I have been able to put together three different physics principles to bring about the result that we need. We send out a signal of the particular predetermined resonance, it then helps amplify, if you like, the natural frequency of the material and I have a way of getting a response back. There is such a thing as working inside the information band. That is what I am doing—I am working into a special subtle energy information band. I do not wish to expand on this too much more; I want the results to speak for themselves because I have done a lot of development work. I

have some other things I can table here, some testimonials from different geologists and geophysicists that I have worked with who have given me testimonials as to the capabilities of the KDLS system.

**CHAIRMAN**—It was essentially developed for your oil and gas leases, was it?

**Mr Knight**—No, not necessarily. I have done a lot of original research and development in my time. I have well over 100 patents in different countries on various other detection systems for the projectiles. KDLS was all original work. I am of the opinion that there is always a way of doing something. I saw that KDLS had potential and kept on working at it. But at this stage I do not wish to get involved in an academic argument with all sorts of professors and so on about how or why it cannot work, because there was a written submission on the last project that I instigated, when I had Australasian Training Aids, and it was sent to army headquarters which said, 'We have examined all this and there is no possible way that this man can detect those projectiles under these circumstances.' Well I just went ahead and did it.

**CHAIRMAN**—You did it very well, too.

**Mr Knight**—That is what I want to do with KDLS. I have not got enough life left to get involved in academic arguments as to whether we are doing it or not. We are doing it.

**CHAIRMAN**—Senator Margetts, do you have any questions?

**Senator MARGETTS**—No, thank you. It was very interesting, but I do not have any questions for Mr Knight.

**CHAIRMAN**—What is the next step, as you see it—going back and resurveying this area?

**Mr Knight**—I would like to do that. I might add, as we mentioned in the submission, that this was done at our own expense. I instigated it, and Whittaker and I paid half each to do it. We had no ulterior motive for doing the survey other than to satisfy curiosity about what we detected 10 years ago and it was put to me that it was a worthwhile thing to be able to try and find the *Sydney*. As it turned out, we knew people who were on board that ship. Since I have done this survey and it was publicised we have been besieged by letters and phone calls from all sorts of people very emotionally involved in the family aspects of the missing crews. So it is now something that I believe should be done.

One of the problems we see—I know we did not say it in the submission—is the depth of water. The *Sydney*, we believe, is in somewhere around 4,900 metres; the *Kormoran*, if it is the *Kormoran*, which we think it is, is in about 800 metres; and the

mystery ship is also in about 4,900 metres. So we are looking at very deep water. There are not many people in the world with a capability to go down to that depth, but it could be done.

If there is going to be a ship search with sidescan sonar and other modern detection means, then we submit that the southern areas around our points, our coordinates, should be searched and should not be dismissed by others who say it could not possibly happen there. When one goes into all the supporting evidence—or supporting stories or whatever one wishes to call it—there is a lot going for why these vessels could be there. We have done quite a lot of work on the mathematics of currents and winds and so on and there is great justification for including that southern area in a search if one is to be conducted. I am not here to say dogmatically that this is it and that there are no other possibilities. What we are saying is that it would be great to survey the southern end and northern sites. I believe it could be shortcutted by looking around our particular coordinates, which means that it would not be necessary to survey the whole of the Indian Ocean.

**Mr PRICE**—You mentioned before that when you did the detection you got three ships that surprised you until you linked up with oral history in the area. Could you elaborate a bit more by what you meant there, and how that made it more sensible?

**Mr Knight**—I am sorry, I did not catch all that.

**Mr PRICE**—I am sorry. I thought that you said earlier that when you did your detection you were surprised to have three possible ships, but that when you then linked up with people who had done some oral history in the area it became sensible to you. Was that what you said or am I misunderstanding what you said?

**Mr Knight**—Yes, I did say that, although I had a suspicion that there might have been another vessel. I did not expect to find a ship or another vessel; I never expected to see that. But I have had my suspicions, the same as a lot of other people who have put their submissions in to you, that there might have been another vessel involved. It is very difficult for us to see, knowing what we do now, how anything could be up in the northern area and how the currents and wind maths can add up to the Detmers position. And when one looks at why there was no debris found and where the 1941 searches were conducted, there could be quite a good reason for that because a lot of that debris could be heading out on a north-west line and the search was perhaps not conducted in the right area. I have been involved in searches myself; I have been looking for people out to sea, using the KDLS just on the signature of human hair for missing people, where I had to locate people, and, my goodness me, it is extremely hard, almost nigh on impossible, to see the people even though they are underneath you, particularly in rough seas. There would be a lot of people in the room with that experience.

Going through all the evidence and the submissions, there were positions given

from various ships and so on and Detmers' position that do not all add up and there is something odd with that. We give the benefit of the doubt to Captain Detmers, who either did not know where he was or had another reason for saying he was further north than he was. There has got to be some other reason, and I do not wish that to be detrimental to Detmers' relatives or anything like that. There is just something odd about the positions. I was surprised that we got all of our positions down in the southern area and nothing in the northern areas, and this is another reason why I want to fly again with new knowledge and KDLS system upgraded even further: now I can do different types of human hair—black, grey, brown and so on, and also human bones.

**Mr PRICE**—What about bald?

**Mr Knight**—What about who?

**Mr PRICE**—Bald.

**Mr Knight**—You have got enough hair for me to get. You would not get away from me.

**CHAIRMAN**—When do you expect to be able to re-fly that survey?

**Mr Knight**—I do not know when that will be.

**CHAIRMAN**—Is it likely to be years, or months?

**Mr Knight**—We had to pay for all of the last surveys. I was hoping that somebody else might help with the expenditure for the next one.

**Mr PRICE**—Mr Chairman is the one with all the money!

**Mr Knight**—He is the one? Whenever I want to do something, nobody has got any money. That is the reason why we went and did all of this ourselves. Rather than play hypotheticals, I thought, 'Let's go and have a look and see.'

**CHAIRMAN**—If you flew that again and you were confident that you had found the wreckage of the *Sydney*, what area would you define as your target area? Are we talking about an area of 20 miles square or one mile square?

**Mr Knight**—Five nautical.

**CHAIRMAN**—Five nautical miles square?

**Mr Knight**—Yes. We put five nautical in this, but in view of the fact that we found out that the water is quite deep, I would probably expand that out to about 10

nautical because it is five kilometres almost down. If I flew in a helicopter I could then go very slowly over the particular recorded points. We would probably bring all those points pretty well together, except for the two halves of the No. 1 target. I still firmly believe that is in two halves because of the information that came back.

Whatever that is, I believe that it is in two separate halves, or perhaps two separate vessels. My guess is it is probably a vessel in two halves. The helicopter enables us to do away with some of the errors. We have errors also in here brought about by the normal GPS, the global positioning system, and then we have got the speed of travel and the human reaction time. The next time I do that I would want to have a differential GPS so that we can communicate with the satellite and get the exact spot, and we can get accuracy to within a metre. If we are in a substantial helicopter then you could go very slowly around those particular points and the error tolerance could be brought right down.

The purpose of this survey was to go and have a look. I asked, 'Is there anything out there? Is it worth looking at?' In view of the evidence we have got here, I am firmly of the opinion it is worth looking at. We could refine this survey considerably now because we know the right equipment that we need to go and do it with. We could then go out and do it with the more expensive ship sidescan sonar and other methods.

**Mr PRICE**—What sort of costing would you suggest?

**Mr Knight**—For us?

**Mr PRICE**—Yes. If the Chairman were to write a cheque this afternoon, and I will speak to him, what sort of costs—

**Mr Knight**—Out of pocket costs would be around \$6,000.

**Mr PRICE**—Is that all, to do a—

**Mr Knight**—Yes. That is just out of pocket expenses; it is not paying for time or anything else. I would do that just for the hell of it, just to prove some more points here because I believe there is enough information to justify a much closer look.

**CHAIRMAN**—As we have no further questions, I thank you very much for coming along, Mr Knight. I hope we do find the pinpoint for both ships. Have you submitted all of the additional information?

**Mr Knight**—I have still got—

**CHAIRMAN**—Were you going to give us some testimonials or something?

**Mr Knight**—Yes, I have got some testimonials here. As proof that we went out I

have pictures of us that are dated. We went out with a JP. It is quite often said that we make up the stories so I thought I would bring along that evidence.

**CHAIRMAN**—Thank you. You will be sent a transcript from Hansard of the evidence that you have given this afternoon to which you can make corrections of grammar. I will formally close this meeting and thank members of the audience, and particularly the witnesses, for coming along today.

Resolved (on motion by **Mr Price**):

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

**Subcommittee adjourned at 3.58 p.m.**