

ADDRESS BY  
HIS EXCELLENCY MAJOR GENERAL MICHAEL JEFFERY AC CVO MC  
**GOVERNOR-GENERAL OF THE COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA**  
ON THE OCCASION OF  
**ADDRESS TO SHIP'S COMPANY OF HMAS BALLARAT**  
NUKU'ALOFA, KINGDOM OF TONGA  
31 JULY 2008

Thank you for the welcome and the privilege of joining you on board. I have a great respect for the RAN.

The ship itself and the turnout of the ships' company are first rate.

Your pride in the ship is evident and does you great credit, indeed your ship has steamed some 145, 000 nautical miles since commissioning in 2002.

Well done to you all.

This goodwill visit for the coronation of King George Tupou V is an important opportunity to demonstrate the close bilateral relationship we have with the Kingdom of Tonga and our support for cooperative and cordial relations with our other Pacific neighbours.

With your presence here, you are setting a fine example in displaying the highest standards of professionalism, commitment and good neighbourliness for which the Royal Australian Navy is justly renowned.

The word flexibility also comes to mind.

Since commissioning, HMAS Ballarat has served with distinction in northern waters on fisheries and illegal immigration control, in the Gulf on Operation Catalyst, as well as in a variety of significant exercises and other missions.

I had the opportunity to visit southern Iraq and see operations at first hand, including visiting your sister frigate, HMAS Parramatta in the Gulf.

In various speeches since then, I have been proud to say to the Australian people that our sailors, soldiers and airmen in Iraq, Afghanistan, the Solomons, East Timor and many other theatres are some of the most impressive young men and women I have seen in more than fifty years associated with the Defence Force and that they have been recognised widely and deservedly for their commitment and dedication to the tasks assigned.

It is a great pleasure to tell you so in person today.

Our country owes all of you a great debt of gratitude for such a fine contribution to stability, peace and freedom in a very troubled world.

I know that a goodwill visit such as this does not necessarily mean the workload is reduced or the high standards you set in normal operations can be relaxed.

Nevertheless, I hope you have the opportunity to enjoy your visit here and in representing Australia make friends with the people of Tonga and its other visitors.

You have all left family members and loved ones in Australia.

From personal experience I am well aware how difficult it can be for families when spouses and loved ones are away on duty.

Many also serve in their own way through the example they set in accepting your absences with good humour and a deep pride in what you are doing.

At the close of more than fifty years of association with the Australian Defence Force, I complete my term as Commander in-Chief in just over a month, proud in the knowledge that the reputation of the ADF has never stood higher in public esteem.

I will leave with many treasured memories of wonderful men and women wearing the uniforms of our armed forces, and serving with pride, skill and humour in its ships, aircraft and battalions in every corner of the globe.

To Commander Goedecke, and all of the ship's company congratulations on your professional performance and may I wish you every success as you face the challenges and opportunities of the future.

Thank you.