

**WESTERN AUSTRALIAN MARITIME MUSEUM — *THE LAST GENTLEMEN OF WAR*
EXHIBITION**

Statement by Minister for Veterans

MR J.M. FRANCIS (Jandakot — Minister for Veterans) [12.02 pm]: Last Thursday, 6 November, I had the opportunity to open *The Last Gentlemen of War* exhibition on behalf of the Minister for Culture and the Arts at the Western Australian Maritime Museum. Timed to coincide with the weekend's commemoration of the 100th anniversary of the Battle of Cocos, it was the first naval engagement Australia took part in, at the beginning of the Great War. The battle was fought between HMAS *Sydney (I)* and the German cruiser SMS *Emden* on 9 November 1914, while *Sydney* was escorting the Anzac convoys. *Sydney* scored a decisive victory, beaching *Emden* onto North Keeling Island, creating an upsurge of national pride for the newly created Royal Australian Navy. But there were also significant accolades for *Emden*—commanded by Captain Karl von Müller—and her crew for their gallantry and bravery. Remarkably, some of the *Emden* crew who had been part of the shore party on Direction Island escaped, and after an audacious voyage eventually made their way back to Germany. Following the Battle of the Cocos Islands, in London *The Times* remarked, “We rejoice that the cruiser *Emden* has been destroyed at last, but we salute Captain von Müller as a brave and chivalrous foe.”

Perhaps because the battle had occurred between the first convoy departing Albany and the Anzac landing on Gallipoli, until now the *Sydney–Emden* has been largely overlooked in the Great War narrative by the wider community, although not by the Royal Australian Navy. This exhibition seeks to redress this omission, and the display recreates the events surrounding the battle and tells a story of honour, decency and even humour—a stark contrast to the bloody, protracted acts of war that would quickly follow. Visitors will also discover the wider story from both the Australian and German perspectives, with a unique gathering of iconic objects and images from both *Sydney* and *Emden* on display. The development of the exhibition has been made possible as a result of generous financial and in-kind sponsorship by a number of organisations and individuals.

The exhibition is now open to the public and will run until 26 April 2015, and entry is free of charge. To date, 1 100 people have visited the exhibition in the short time it has been open. The exhibition will then tour other capital cities and regional areas. I encourage members of Parliament and the community to take advantage by visiting this important exhibition while it is in Perth at the Maritime Museum.