



23 May 2008

The Secretary
HMAS SYDNEY II
Commission of Enquiry
Level 18
Defence Plaza
270 Pitt Street
SYDNEY NSW 2000

e576018

Dear Madam,

I am a PhD Candidate studying Naval History at the University of Wollongong.

I would like to draw the attention of the Commission of Inquiry into a number of issues that have been prompted by a media report that followed the recent discovery of HMAS SYDNEY II.

Several days after the finding, there was a television report which identified that the search team had had access to previously unknown information. The daughter of the Australian Intelligence Officer who had interrogated Detmers after the war was shown with the original copy of a document apparently produced by Detmers describing the action. The TV report claimed that all other copies of this document were missing the first and last pages of the report, and one of these pages contained critical information which had assisted the search team in the discovery of the Sydney.

If this report was correct it raises a number of issues:

- Firstly, the report produced by Detmers was clearly an official document. How did it come to pass that the original of this document ended up in the private possession of the daughter of the Intelligence Officer? Why was this document not preserved in the National Archives of Australia, and why has it not been recovered now that it has been located and identified?
- Secondly, this report apparently contained information that was not available in the public domain, but was apparently known to the search team, and not released by them until *after* the SYDNEY had been located. Given that the search team was largely funded from State and Federal Government sources, this secrecy is potentially disturbing. Why was this information withheld from the public? What would have happened if the search had been unsuccessful – would they have kept this under their belt until their next attempt? It is hard to avoid the conclusion that this largely publicly funded search team considered it more important that *they* discovered the SYDNEY, rather than that the SYDNEY was found as soon as possible. Given the conspiracy theories that have surrounded the loss of the SYDNEY, it would have been ill-advised of

the Government representatives on the search team to cooperate with such with-holding from the public of key historical data on the loss.

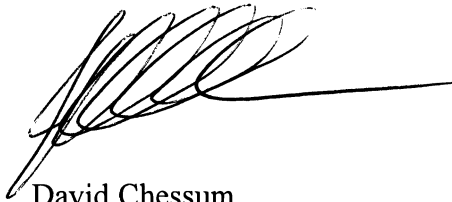
It is therefore requested that the Commission of Inquiry address the following points:

- The original copy of the Detmers report on the SYDNEY vs KORMORAN action should be recovered and deposited in the National Archives of Australia.
- The Government representatives on the Search Team should be questioned to determine whether they were aware of this item, or any other official information held by the Search Team which is not yet in the Public Domain, and appropriate action taken if required to ensure that any such information is made available to the public.

I do not seek to be heard by the Commission of Inquiry in person, although I am certainly willing to do so if requested.

Please don't hesitate to contact me on [REDACTED] or by return letter if you require any clarification or additional information in relation to this letter.

Best regards

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'David Chessum', with a long horizontal line extending to the right.

David Chessum
Lt Cdr, RNZN (Retired)