

COL. H.C. SHRADER

LETTERS

21.6.78

Dear Sir,

In reply to your letter in the Melbourne Sun of 20th June, I am one of the few people in the world who can write the full and true story of the Sydney-Kormoran action.

I was Commandant and CO of No. Camp Tatura from 1944 to 1946. Among the prisoners there was the entire living crew of the Kormoran sunk by the Sydney in her final death throes.

Some years later an article was written for, and published by, a Melbourne weekly. It was so wrong in every detail that I was driven to make an appointment with the late Mr. Pacini, the editor of the Melbourne Sun, to whom I gave the true facts.

After hearing my story, he made a cash offer to me – but, in doing so, I had to get relief from the Official Secrets Act.

Hot apace, I went to Victoria Barracks in St. Kilda Road, the residence of the then Chief of Staff, Lt. General Sir Sydney Rowell, who was a fellow staff cadet with me in the early days of Duntroon.

He contacted the Senior Naval Intelligence Officer, who, as soon as he heard my story, decided that it was too big for him to make a decision, and that he would contact Headquarters in Canberra and give me the news of their decision.

That decision is contained in the enclosed Photostat of the letter I received [see below]. That letter speaks for itself – I speak with the authority of being the only living person in Australia who has read the log of the Kormoran on that fateful day – by the courtesy of the Kormoran's Commander, Captain Detmers, who let me read it in his cabin on the 'Southern Cross' before she sailed from Port Melbourne for Hamburg.

Any stories you may get in answer to your letter I would ask you to let them read the letter sent to me from Naval Intelligence.

Yours faithfully,

(signed) H.C. Schrader

*Naval Intelligence Division,
Navy Office*

12.6.58

Dear Mr. Schrader,

Further to our conversation of this morning, I have ascertained that there is no security objection to the publication of the story of the 'Sydney' as you envisage [sic] it.

Without attempting to persuade you not to proceed with the project, as no doubt 'the few bob', as you put it, would be very welcome, I would like to remind you that there are today many people who lost their fathers, brothers, sons etc in 'Sydney' and are so very proud of the way 'Sydney' died. To destroy this pride would be inexcusable.

Yours sincerely,