

In an application under FOI, I requested a copy of the Board Of Inquiry Report from MOD Navy, UK.

“Fleet Order No 4131 issued by the Admiralty at the beginning of the Second World War required that in any case involving loss of or damage to one of HM ships, a copy in duplicate of the Board of Inquiry (if one was held) had to be deposited with the Admiralty London, the Head of the Naval Historical Branch in the Ministry of Defence (the successor to the Admiralty) has confirmed that no such report relating to the loss of HMAS Sydney is held by the Ministry of Defence. This is not conclusive proof that there was no Board of Inquiry, but if there was, there is no evidence of its report being held in London.”

My reply from them, was that there was no report, but that the report by Mr Eldridge Navy Office, was accepted by the Admiralty as a final report. However, during the exchange of e-mails with Mr Demetriou, MOD UK, he mentioned that the Admiralty had added two pages to the report which were not available in Australian Archives.

A request for these documents was refused in that they were available on application and not covered by my FOI application. As I was in no position to travel all the way to the UK to see these documents, I passed this information on to others. I received a reply from Mr Mearns, asking for details.

His work with Peter Hore had claimed that all documents associated with HMAS Sydney had been seen and nothing was left in PRO Kew that had not been already inspected. Apparently neither David Mearns, nor Peter Hore actually did this search, but had another person, Bob O'Hara do it for them.

The references given to me by Mr Demetriou was given to David Mearns with his assurance he would pass us copies when he obtained them. After repeated requests he made feeble excuses not to do this and the result is that no one else has seen them. Copies of the e-mail exchanges attached.

The reference source for this document is
ADM 199/736 War History Case, PRO Kew. Document is M05540/42, from Secretary of the Navy, Melbourne.