



Jim&Anne

From: "Demetriou, Mike Mr" [REDACTED]
To: "Jim&Anne" [REDACTED]
Sent: Wednesday, 23 January 2008 3:06 AM
Subject: FOI Request - HMAS Sydney II

Mr Eagles,

I am now in a position to respond to your email on the sinking of the HMAS Sydney II, received early today (attached below), and your repeated request for a copy of the BOI report into the sinking.

I first have to say that the RN Navy Casualty Branch have once again searched the records contained in their archives, and confirmed again that they do not hold a copy of a BOI report into the sinking.

As I mentioned in my email earlier today, I did unfortunately misdirect you to the Australian Sea Power Centre for a copy of the report. The RN Naval Historical Branch (NHB) have now explained that when this was originally requested their automatic response was to say that, since HMAS SYDNEY was an Australian vessel, if there had been a Board of Inquiry (which as explained below is unlikely), then it would have been conducted in Australia, and would presumably be held in Australia. The Sea Power Centre was a suggestion for a place that might be asked for advice or information. This message unfortunately became somewhat scrambled as it passed through several hands and became a statement that it existed and would be held there.

The NHB have additionally provided the following summary of the documentation you have referred to, and the reasons for the, most likely, non existence of a BOI report into the sinking:

1. The file referred to by Mr Eagles as M.05540/42 is publicly available at the National Archives at Kew in ADM 199/736. ADM 199/736 is a War History Case that will consist of several documents bound together. The relevant document, M.05540/42, is entitled *Report on the Loss of HMAS Sydney*.
2. M.05540/42 was sent to the Admiralty by the Secretary of the Navy Office for the Commonwealth of Australia.
3. This document is a duplicate of the one publicly available in the National Archives of Australia in Melbourne. Its series number is MP 1185/8, and its title in Australia appears to have been recorded as *Mr Eldridge – Compilation of Report on loss of "Sydney"*.
4. The copy held by the National Archives of Australia is also available online on their website.
5. The British and Australian copies are identical, down to the poor spacing between letters. The only difference with the British copy is that it contains two additional pages with comments from the Admiralty.

When Captain Peter Hore was commissioned by the Australian Government to research the sinking of the SYDNEY in British archives he viewed ADM 199/736, a fact that was subsequently noted in his book, *HMAS Sydney II: The cruiser and the controversy in the archives of the United Kingdom* [Peter Hore ed., Papers in Australian Maritime Affairs No. 9, the Royal Australian Navy Sea Power Centre, Canberra, 2001, ISBN 0 642 29554 9].

The fact that this book does not refer to a Board of Inquiry also leads me to believe that one was never held. In wartime in the UK, Boards of Inquiry were only held by exception rather than every time a ship was lost.

I cannot comment on what the regulations and practices were in place in Australia: that would be an issue for the Australian Government.

I do appreciate the reasons for your request, and I am sorry not to be able to provide a substantive response, but in this case the report does not, as far as we are aware, exist. And I can only repeat that as far as we are aware, all information on the sinking of HMAS Sydney II, is already in the public domain. I do however hope the explanations above are of some use.

Yours sincerely

23/01/2008