

HMAS SYDNEY II COI
Statutory declaration of Mr John Neal Brown

Commonwealth of Australia
STATUTORY DECLARATION
Statutory Declarations Act 1959

I, John Neal Brown, [REDACTED] retiree, make the following declaration under the *Statutory Declarations Act, 1959*:

1. I was born 17 Feb 21. I enlisted in the Royal Australian Navy on 01 May 38. My official number is 22044.
2. Briefly, my career in the RAN was:
 - a. I did initial training at the Flinders Naval Depot at HMAS CERBERUS for recruit training and the wireless telegraphy course (a total of 15 months);
 - b. I joined HMAS SYDNEY on 21 Jul 39, as set out in my Certificate of Service. Before the outbreak of war, I recall we cruised in South East Asia. When war broke out, I served in her both in Australian and surrounding waters and in the Mediterranean.
 - c. I served in SYDNEY until Dec 40. I then spent Christmas 1940 in a British converted merchant ship transporting Italian Prisoners to Bombay. After, a further few weeks in Ceylon, I finally arrived back in Sydney in Feb 41, about a week before SYDNEY arrived.
 - d. I was then posted to HMAS PLATYPUS, a WWI-era submarine depot ship re-commissioned and based in Darwin. While officially I was based on her, I actually spent most of my time on small ships being supported by PLATYPUS. Some of the duties we did in these small ships included taking



supplies and mail to various forces in Dutch East Indies and undertaking raids in places such as Timor.

- e. In mid 1943, I was posted to New Guinea and in 1945, HMAS WESTRALIA. I continued to work as a w/t operator throughout this period.
 - f. I served on various ships until 1951, including as the Petty Officer w/t on HMAS AUSTRALIA from Jul 49-Jan 50 and discharged from the RAN in 16 Feb 51.
3. I hold my original Certificate of Service which I have shown to Lieutenant Vesper, Counsel Assisting the Commission of Inquiry into the loss of HMAS SYDNEY II.

My time in HMAS SYDNEY

4. In SYDNEY, my role was a telegraphist. There were twenty-five of us in our branch, known as the W/T Branch.
5. My on-watch cruising stations position was in the main w/t office. That is where all of the main equipment was: the main receivers and the main transmitter. The Second w/t office had an auxiliary transmitter and receivers. There was a third w/t office but I am not sure exactly what equipment was in there.
6. Other than a very short stint in "A" turret when I joined the ship, my action stations position was in one of the three w/t offices. Why it changed from time to time was not something I ever understood – I merely followed the orders of the Chief telegraphist, CPO David Shepherd, who went down with SYDNEY.
7. There were two electronic methods for external ship communication, wireless telegraphy (w/t) and radio telegraphy (r/t).

Wireless Telegraphy



8. W/t was the main form of electronic external ship communication. It was essentially a shore to ship form of communication. All w/t communication was done by Morse code.
9. W/t could be transmitted in low, medium or high frequency. Low would be in the 500 -1000 Kilocycles (kc), medium: 2000-7000kc and high: 7,000 – 20,000+kc. In Australian waters, HARMAN would have been transmitting 24 hrs a day, usually in high frequency, which had a wider range. If they were going to change their frequency, they would notify us by signal. If a shore station only wanted to broadcast a short distance, they would transmit in low frequency.
10. Every message which came into the ship by w/t or r/t (and anything received by lamp or flag) was called a Signal and should be recorded.
11. I can not recall ever actually transmitting w/t during wartime when we were at sea in SYDNEY – we were under strict instructions not to break w/t silence. This was to not reveal our presence.
12. I did later break w/t silence when on the HMAS KARU, in Timor, when we were heavily under attack by Japanese. This was to send an emergency message in plain language (in Morse) to Darwin. Commanding officers knew that, in an emergency and where the enemy knew their location, they could break w/t silence and transmit in plain language. For all British and Australian warships, if we ever were to transmit (eg in case of an emergency) this would be on a different frequency to that used by shore establishments to transmit and thus other Allied ships would probably not hear that transmission.
13. As mentioned, during wartime, our job was only to monitor for wireless transmission. That is what we did in SYDNEY, in watches, 24 hours a day. We constantly monitored at least two frequencies:
 - a. Our base's transmission frequency. When on the Australia station, SYDNEY would have been on the same frequency as HMAS HARMAN and therefore monitoring its frequency constantly; and



- b. the distress frequency, 500kc.
14. In wartime, we also may be constantly monitoring other frequencies such as, when we were with a Cruiser Squadron in the Mediterranean, the Flag Officer's frequency.
15. When we were operating in the Australian Theatre, HARMAN was the transmitting station that we monitored. HARMAN's transmission tower was in Belconnen. HARMAN's transmission range would have been well over 5,000 miles. So, we could be off the Western Australian Coast and still monitor HARMAN's frequency.
16. In wartime, every communication was encrypted. When we received it, it would come out as a series of seemingly random letters or numbers. The w/t operator, with headphones on, would write down the letters and then pass that sheet of paper to a decoder - another w/t operator who had the relevant code book. We had lots of code books. I can not recall exactly how we knew which code book to use for each message but it had something to do with each pre-fix.
17. The code books were all in numerals and letters but beyond that, I cannot explain the types of codes used.
18. Intelligence signals, which were marked Classified, were communicated this way - in code - except that we would not decode them. Rather, my memory is that the raw message would be passed up to the Cypher Officer who would receive all of the intelligence signals, decode them and distribute them to those on the distribution list (eg, the Captain and the Commander).
19. I do not know anything about what these intelligence signals may have been about. I have been asked about whether we would receive things such as Weekly Intelligence Reports or amendments to the Visual Identification books. I can not recall any such thing.

Radio Telegraphy

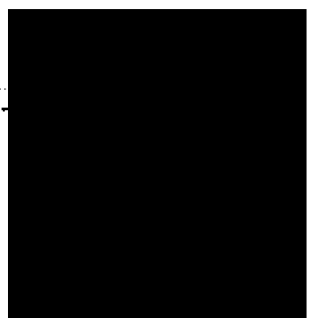
- 20. Radio telegraphy was only able to be used for very short range communication, such as for ship-to-ship communication at close range (a couple of miles – less than the distance that ships could signal by lamp).
- 21. SYDNEY did not have Radio Direction Finding (RDF), the forerunner of RADAR.
- 22. Sydney also had an internal telephone but that was not in our area of responsibility – that was maintained by the torpedomen, who were also the ships electricians.
- 23. There were different aerials for transmitting (horizontal strung between the masts) and receiving (almost vertical strung between the foremast and a position abaft of the bridge). We were trained to be able to rig jury aerials. However, they needed a mast so, if there was no mast, they could not be rigged.
- 24. I have been asked questions about whether and how SYNDEY encountered any unidentified ships but, given my position in the ship, I can not say.

I understand that a person who intentionally makes a false statement in a statutory declaration is guilty of an offence under section 11 of the *Statutory Declarations Act 1959* and I believe that the statements in this declaration are true in every particular.

M. Brown

Declared at Melbourne on the 6th day of June, 2008.

Before me *S. Jones*
S/C 33765





Commonwealth of Australia
STATUTORY DECLARATION
Statutory Declarations Act 1959

1 Insert the name, address and occupation of person making the declaration

1,1 JOHN NEAL BROWN
RETIREE

make the following declaration under the *Statutory Declarations Act 1959*:

2 Set out matter declared to in numbered paragraphs

2 THE INFORMATION CONTAINED IN THE ATTACHED DOCUMENTS ARE TRUE & CORRECT.

I understand that a person who intentionally makes a false statement in a statutory declaration is guilty of an offence under section 11 of the *Statutory Declarations Act 1959*, and I believe that the statements in this declaration are true in every particular.

3 Signature of person making the declaration

3

4 Place
5 Day
6 Month and year

Declared at ⁴ Murrumbidgee on ⁵ 6TH of ⁶ June, 2008.

7 Signature of person before whom the declaration is made (see over)

Before me,
7

8 Full name, qualification and address of person before whom the declaration is made (In printed letters)

8 S. Gues. s/c 33765.



Note 1 A person who intentionally makes a false statement in a statutory declaration is guilty of an offence, the punishment for which is imprisonment for a term of 4 years — see section 11 of the *Statutory Declarations Act 1959*.

Note 2 Chapter 2 of the *Criminal Code* applies to all offences against the *Statutory Declarations Act 1959* — see section 5A of the *Statutory Declarations Act 1959*.