

HMAS SYDNEY II COI
Statutory declaration of Mr John Joseph Ravenscroft

Commonwealth of Australia

STATUTORY DECLARATION

Statutory Declarations Act 1959

I, John Joseph Ravenscroft of [REDACTED] retiree, make the following declaration under the Statutory Declarations Act, 1959:

1. I was born on 10 May 1921 in Subiaco, Western Australia. I enlisted in the Royal Australian Navy Reserve in May 1939 and my official number was F2805.
2. Annexed to this Statutory Declaration is a copy of my Certificate of Service which lists the ships in which I served.
3. I also annex a copy of my Submission to the SYDNEY II COI, dated 20 June 2008.
4. In short, my career in the RAN included:
 - a. in 1939, I did my recruit and seamanship training at the HMAS CERBERUS V in Cliff St Fremantle, leaving there an Able Seaman;
 - b. I was mobilised for service on 29 August 1939 and on 2 September 1939, I joined HMAS SYDNEY II in Fremantle as an Able Seaman. CAPT Collins was the CO at that time. CMDR Hilken was the Commander;
 - c. due to an eyesight problem, in June 1941, my rating was changed from Able Seaman to writer;
 - d. from 17 June 1941 to 26 October 1941, my duty was as a writer in SYDNEY's ship's office;

- e. on 27 October 1941, I left HMAS SYDNEY II and was posted to HMAS LEUWIN to await an on-draft to HMAS CERBERUS to undertake a course for a commission. I remained at LEUWIN until February 1943 during which time I worked in the Naval Control Service based in the Elders Building in Fremantle – the same building that housed the District Naval Officer Western Australia;
- f. in May 1943, after three months at CERBERUS, I was posted to HMAS RUSHCUTTER as the pay Sub-Lieutenant;
- g. on 23 June 1943, I was posted to HMAS MELVILLE, Darwin, as the supply Sub-Lieutenant (RANR);
- h. I served throughout the rest of the war in various RAN ships as a supply officer;
- i. I served in the RANR after the war as a supply officer and was promoted to Lieutenant Commander in June 1957;
- j. In 1951, I was awarded the Volunteer Reserve Decoration; and
- k. in June 1962, I discharged from the Navy.

My Service in HMAS SYDNEY

- 5. Throughout my entire time in SYDNEY my Action Stations position was in “X” turret as one of the breech workers. Also, we in the turrets would take turns manning the phone and I recall having this duty from time to time.
- 6. My Cruising Stations position was on the 4 inch gundeck until June 1941 when I became a writer and worked in the ship’s office when the ship was at Cruising Stations. In 1939 and early 1940, some of the seamen, including myself, were rostered to spend a period manning the Evershed Bearing Indicators – there was

one on either bridge wing. I only performed this duty under CAPT Collins. These sights were always manned and the seaman manning it was often asked to take ranges on ships. This was mostly on ships in convoy. An example that I can recall is one where CAPT Collins told me to take the range of a ship which was lagging behind its allocated station in the convoy.

7. When I was at Cruising Stations, all of the 4 inch guns would be manned with enough men to fire them in an emergency. The crews there at Cruising Stations would not necessarily be the same crew manning the guns if the ship went to action Stations. Also, while crew members may have been based on the 4 inch gun deck when the ship was at Cruising Stations, they may have other duties which would take him elsewhere. For example, in 1941, I was detailed to become a writer for CMDR Hilken and thus, if he needed me (for example, to type up his Night Orders or his orders for the next day), I would leave the 4 inch gundeck and go off to confer with him.
8. As far as I knew, when the ship went to Action Stations, CMDR Hilken would close-up at the Lower Steering Position.

Clothing

9. All of the crew who manned the 4 inch guns wore blue overalls. Occasionally, a 4 inch gunner may be in rig of the day and did not have time to change. The crew in the turrets would also be in blue overalls. On the 4 inch guns, the crew at Action Stations would be wearing anti flash gear (hoods and gloves) and helmets. In the turrets, we would be similarly dressed but without helmets.
10. We would also have our lifebelts either around our waists or nearby.
11. The Engineering officers wore white overalls.

CAPT Burnett

12. I can recall the time when CAPT Burnett assumed command. As far as I could tell, the ship ran the same way as it had under CAPT Collins. He did not appear to do things any differently. The impression I was left with was that he seemed to want to carry on in the same way as CAPT Collins had.

13. For example, when the ship went to Action Stations, as far as I can recall, there were no procedural changes; that is, all armament was armed, as normal.

14. I can not recall any challenges to unidentified merchant ships under either CAPT Collins or CAPT Burnett. This may have been due to the fact that, if there were any such challenges, the ship would go to Action Stations and I would have closed up in "X" turret. Also, I had been suffering from deteriorating eyesight since mid 1940 (attributed by the ship's doctor, CMDR Gault, to excessive periods on the Evershed Bearing Indicators) so, had I been on the upper decks at a time when a strange vessel was sighted, I was unlikely to have seen it clearly enough to identify it.

15. I have been asked about whether I can recall:
 - a. CAPT Burnett's address to the crew at Sunday Divisions in early October 1941 about there being a raider in the area;

 - b. Any of the ship challenges undertaken by SYDNEY in late September/early October 1941;

 - c. SYDNEY recovering a floating target near Christmas Island in early October 1941.

Due to the lapse of years, I must say that I have no recollection of any of these matters.

Alleged damage to A Turret

16. I have also been asked by Counsel Assisting the HMAS SYDNEY II COI whether I can recall the passage across the Great Australian Bight on or about 22 September 1941 and whether damage was sustained to "A" turret. Firstly, I can say that we had many rough passages across the Bight and none stand out as any worse than all of the others that I can recall. I can not specifically recall the passage on 22 September.

17. I am sure that if there had been any damage to a turret that required an overhaul in port, including being manhandled back into position (as suggested in the book by Michael Montgomery, *Who Sank the Sydney?*, at pp208-209) I would recall this. Such an event would have been witnessed by many of the ship's crew who would be on the upper deck carrying out normal duties or relaxing, which would be normal when we were in port. Also, this would have been a subject of discussion amongst the crew of other turrets, including myself. I am quite sure I never heard such matters being discussed.

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.

Declared at Vincentia on 25th of July 2008


John Joseph Ravenscroft

Before me



JP for NSW
(160222)