

# The Hon Darren Chester MP

Minister for Veterans' Affairs  
Minister for Defence Personnel

## MEDIA RELEASE

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### MERCHANT NAVY DAY REMEMBERS MERCHANT MARINERS' VITAL WARTIME SERVICE

TOMORROW Australia remembers the invaluable role the Merchant Navy has played in the more than 100 years since it first served the nation, especially in both world wars.

Minister for Veterans' Affairs Darren Chester said tomorrow was an important reminder for Australians to thank those who served in the Merchant Navy for their service and sacrifice.

"The Merchant Navy was comprised of mostly civilian crews, and was responsible for ensuring valuable cargo reached the personnel who needed it most," Mr Chester said.

"These ships and their crew, merchant mariners, often served in not only challenging but dangerous circumstances, many did so without defences as they were often unarmed.

"Merchant vessels weren't only attacked in distant waters, but also within sight of the Australian coastline while crossing common trade routes and worked with the constant threat of attack from enemy submarines, surface raiders, aircraft, and sea mines."

Merchant Navy Day is commemorated on the day the first British merchant vessel, SS Athenia, was torpedoed and sunk without warning by the German submarine U-30 only 10 hours after Britain's declaration of war on 3 September 1939.

"One of the best-known battles involving merchant mariners is the Battle of the Atlantic, which lasted almost the entire duration of Second World War and saw over 3,000 Allied merchant ships sunk and some 30,000 Allied sailors and merchant mariners lost at sea," Mr Chester said.

"Today we remember our merchant mariners and honour the some 800 Australians who tragically died serving the Allied cause during the First and Second World Wars."

This year, for the 75th anniversary of the end of the Second World War, Australians used #OneInAMillion to share their loved ones' stories of service on social media and accompanied this with a photo of them holding the photograph of their loved one. Australians are encouraged to continue to share their stories to commemorate our Merchant Navy mariners who served during the wars.

Learn more about Merchant Navy Day and the crucial role that merchant mariners played in wars and conflicts by visiting the Anzac Portal.

**ENDS**

**MEDIA CONTACTS:**  
**Rachel Tharratt: 02 6277 7820**  
**DVA Media: 02 6289 6466**

**Office of the Hon. Darren Chester, Canberra ACT.**