



# Know your warships!

Richard Pelvin with  
Robert Darby  
Australian War Memorial

The concluding part of this series continues to explain the purpose and uses of different types of warships operated by the Royal Australian Navy. It concerns those vessels that support the fleet by performing supply, survey, training, boom defence, transport and amphibious warfare duties. As there are far too many vessels to list comprehensively, the more important types have been chosen to illustrate the complexity of the support required for a twentieth-century navy.

As with the previous parts, the vessels listed are mostly purpose-built for the navy, although requisitioned vessels are more common among fleet support vessels than among combat vessels. Many are warships converted from combat roles.

The following details are provided:

**Service dates:**

From commissioning to decommissioning *or* conversion to or from another role.

**Displacement:**

The displacement of a ship is determined by the weight of water it displaces. Standard displacement is given. For requisitioned merchant vessels gross tonnage is given.

**Dimensions:**

Given as length by beam (width) by draught (depth of the ship beneath the water), in metres.

**Maximum speed:**

Given in knots.

**Armament:**

In most cases, only main armament is detailed. Given in inches or shell weight in most cases, metric for later vessels.

**Complement:**

The number of men serving aboard the ship.

**Sources:** John Bastock, *Australia's ships of war* (Sydney: Angus and Robertson, 1975); Ross Gillett and Colin Graham, *Warships of Australia* (Adelaide: Rigby, 1977); J. H. Straczek, *Royal Australian Navy A-Z: ships, aircraft and shore establishments* (Sydney: Navy Public Affairs, 1996).

## Survey vessels



From the earliest days of European settlement the Royal Navy conducted extensive hydrographic surveys of Australian waters. This task passed to the RAN after the First World War. During the Second World War, Australian vessels undertook surveys in waters around New Guinea and the Philippines as well as around Australia. After the war the RAN was given sole responsibility for surveying Australian waters.

# Survey vessels (continued)



## Arabis-class survey vessel (former minesweeping sloop)



1,250 tons      81.61 x 10.21 x 3.58      16 knots      1 x 4.7-inch gun      complement 79

*Geranium* 1919–1932

## 24-class survey vessel (former convoy sloop)



1,320 tons      84.27 x 10.6 x 3.65      17 knots      1 x 3-pounder gun      complement 82

*Moresby* 1925–1946

## Grimsby-class survey vessel (former sloop)



1,080 tons      81.14 x 10.97 x 3.07      16.5 knots      1 x 40 mm gun      complement 135

*Warrego* 1944–1963

## Bathurst-class survey vessels (former corvettes)



735 tons      56.69 x 9.44 x 2.59      15.5 knots      1 x 4-inch gun      complement 78

*Benalla* 1943–1958

*Shepparton* 1953–1958

## River-class survey vessels (former frigates)



1,370 tons      91.74 x 11.12 x 3.65      20 knots      1 x 40 mm gun      complement 140

*Barcoo* 1946–1971

*Diamantina* 1959–1980

*Gascoyne* 1959–1971

*Lachlan* 1945–1949

## Survey vessel (former motor stores lighter)



340 tons      36.57 x 7.31 x 1.9      9.5 knots      no armament      complement 28

*Paluma* 1957–1975

## Survey vessel



2,000 tons      95.7 x 12.8 x 3.81      18 knots      2 x 40 mm guns      complement 146

*Moresby* 1964–1997

## Survey vessel



800 tons      49.07 x 10.05 x 3.7      13.5 knots      no armament      complement 38

*Flinders* 1973–1998

## Survey vessels (continued)



### Survey vessel



1,910 tons      96.6 x 13.41 x 4.6      17 knots      no armament      complement 120

*Cook* 1980–1990

### Mermaid-class survey motor launches

320 tons      36.6 x 7.31 x 1.9      9.5 knots      no armament      complement 12

*Mermaid* 1989–

*Benalla* 1990–

*Shepparton* 1990–

*Paluma* 1989–

### Pacific-class survey vessel

2,550 tons      71.2 x 15.2 x 4.4      15 knots      no armament      complement 42

*Leeuwin* 1998–

*Melville* 1998–

## Amphibious warfare vessels



The development of specialised vessels to land troops over a beach commenced in the First World War but accelerated rapidly in the Second World War. These vessels come in many different guises, including converted passenger liners carrying small landing craft to take the troops to the beach, as well as vessels such as the landing ship tank and the landing ship heavy which can beach themselves to land men and vehicles directly. The training and helicopter-support ships have a vertical lift capability.



### Landing ship infantry (former armed merchant cruiser)

11,000 tons gross      150.57 x 20.17 x 7.39      17 knots      1 x 4-inch gun      complement 580      capacity 1,280 troops

*Kanimbla* 1943–1949

### Landing ship infantry (former armed merchant cruiser)



10,900 tons gross      146.9 x 20.17 x 7.31      16.5 knots      1 x 12-pounder gun      complement 550      capacity 1,250 troops

*Manoora* 1943–1947

### Landing ship infantry (former armed merchant cruiser)



8,100 tons gross      136.55 x 18.36 x 7.62      15.5 knots      1 x 6-inch gun      complement c. 550      capacity 1,250 troops

*Westralia* 1943–1947

# Amphibious warfare vessels (continued)



## Landing ship tank Mark III



2,256 tons	105.3 x 16.45 x 3.5	13 knots	4 x 40 mm guns	complement 104
<i>Lae</i> 1946–1955	<i>Labuan</i> 1946–1955		<i>Tarakan</i> 1946–1955	
<i>LST 3008</i> 1946–1950	<i>LST 3014</i> 1946–1950		<i>LST 3022</i> 1946–1950	

## Balikpapan-class landing craft heavy



310 tons	44.5 x 10.05 x 1.9	10 knots	2 x 0.5-inch machine-guns	complement 14
<i>Balikpapan</i> 1974–1999	<i>Brunei</i> 1973–1997		<i>Tarakan</i> 1973–1998	
<i>Betano</i> 1974–1997	<i>Labuan</i> 1973–2000		<i>Wewak</i> 1973–1997	

## Papua New Guinea Squadron

<i>Buna</i> 1973–1974	<i>Salamaua</i> 1973–1974
-----------------------	---------------------------

## Landing ship heavy



6,000 tons	129.5 x 19.6 x 4.3	17 knots	2 x 40 mm guns	complement 130
<i>Tobruk</i> 1981–				

## Training and helicopter support ship (converted from *Newport*-class tank landing ship)



8,450 tons	159.2 x 21.18 x 5.3	17 knots	1 x 20 mm Phalanx close-in weapons system	complement 180
<i>Kanimbla</i> 1994–	<i>Manoora</i> 1994–			

# Transports



The transportation of troops and equipment has largely been carried out by merchant vessels. However, the RAN has commissioned some ships as troop transports, especially during the Vietnam War when trade unions refused to support the war.

## Requisitioned merchant vessel



11,118 tons gross	159.2 x 21.18 x 5.3	14 knots	4 x 4-inch guns	complement unknown
<i>Berrima</i> 1914				

## Transports (continued)



### Converted aircraft carrier

17,233 tons      212.75 x 24.38 x 7.62      24 knots      4 x 40 mm guns      complement 607

*Sydney* 1962–1973



### Requisitioned merchant vessel

3,904 tons gross      123.44 x 16.15 x 6.85      11.7 knots      no armament      complement 91

*Boonaroo* 1967



### Requisitioned merchant vessel

6,350 tons gross      132.58 x 17.06 x 6.7      13.5 knots      no armament      complement unknown

*Jeparit* 1969–1972



### Wavepiercing catamaran

1,250 tons      86.6 x 26.0 x 3.5      40 knots      no armament      complement 20

*Jervis Bay* 1999–



## Replenishment vessels



Initially oilers and colliers were mainly employed to transport fuel to storage facilities where ships could refuel; in early times, fuelling at sea was rare though not unknown. Replenishment at sea was brought to a high stage of development during the Second World War and includes the ability to replenish not only fuel but stores and ammunition as well.

### Fleet oiler

7,930 tons      115.21 x 13.86 x 7.08      10 knots      1 x 4-inch gun      complement 65

*Kurumba* 1920–1948



### Fleet collier

9,700 tons      116.43 x 16.45 x 8.53      11 knots      no armament      complement 70

*Biloela* 1920–1931



### Tide-class fleet replenishment tanker

15,000 tons      177.69 x 21.64 x 9.75      17 knots      6 x 40 mm guns      complement 205

*Supply* 1962–1985

## Replenishment vessels (continued)



### Durance-class fleet replenishment ship

17,880 tons      157.3 x 21.2 x 8.65      20 knots      3 x 40 mm guns      complement 205

*Success* 1986–



### Underway replenishment ship

40,870 tons      170.69 x 25.94 x 11.56      17 knots      no armament      complement 60

*Westralia* 1989–



## Training ships



With the exception of *Tingira*, which remained moored in Rose Bay, training ships provide sea-going experience for RAN personnel. The vessels listed below were converted from other roles for their task. The RAN has also used vessels such as the *Bathurst*-class corvettes and general purpose vessels.

### Boys' training ship (former clipper)

2,131 tons      96.62 x 12.19 x 4.87      permanently moored      no armament      complement c. 65

*Tingira* 1912–1927



### Cadets' training ship (converted frigate)

1,060 tons      81.14 x 10.97 x 3.04      16.5 knots      2 x 4-inch guns      complement 135

*Swan* 1956–1962



### Cadets' training ship (converted destroyer)

2,400 tons      115.51 x 12.49 x 4.8      32 knots      2 x 4.5-inch guns      complement 290

*Anzac* 1962–1974



### Fleet training ship (converted destroyer)

2,800 tons      118.4 x 13.1 x 3.9      30.5 knots      4 x 4.5-inch guns      complement 260

*Duchess* 1974–1977



### Fleet training ship (converted merchant vessel)

8,915 tons      135.7 x 21.5 x 6.1      17 knots      no armament      complement 111

*Jervis Bay* 1977–1994



## Depot ships



Fitted out with stores, repair and recreation facilities, depot ships are effectively mobile bases allowing flotilla craft to operate away from fixed bases.

### Submarine depot ship and repair ship



3,455 tons      99.06 x 13.41 x 4.77      15.5 knots      1 x 4.7-inch gun      complement 360

*Platypus* 1919–1956

### Destroyer tender



10,500 tons      156.97 x 9.75 x 3.65      20 knots      4 x 40 mm guns      complement 397

*Stalwart* 1968–1990

## Boom defence vessels



Boom defence vessels are distinctive in appearance, with long horns projecting beyond the bows and rounded sterns to facilitate the handling of nets, booms, buoys, cable and other impedimenta necessary to provide a barrier to protect harbours from raiding craft and submarines. Darwin had the longest boom defence in the world; the Sydney defences were instrumental in foiling the attack by Japanese midget submarines in 1942.

### Net-class boom defence vessel



533 tons      41.14 x 7.77 x 3.81      9.5 knots      1 x 3-inch gun      complement 30

*Kookaburra* 1939–1965

### Bar-class boom defence vessels



768 tons      54.4 x 9.82 x 4.26      11.5 knots      1 x 3-inch gun      complement 32

*Kangaroo* 1940–1967

*Koala* 1940–1969

*Karang* 1941–1965

### Boom defence vessel



760 tons      50.2 x 9.75 x 3.65      10 knots      1 x 40 mm gun      complement 35

*Kimbla* 1956–1959