



## PRIME MINISTER

**SPEECH BY THE PRIME MINISTER, THE HON P J KEATING, MP  
LAUNCHING CEREMONY FOR SUBMARINE COLLINS, PORT ADELAIDE,  
SATURDAY, 28 AUGUST 1993 PLEASE CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY**

Today's launching ceremony of the submarine COLLINS represents the culmination of a commitment made by this Government in the mid-eighties not only to Australia's defence, but also to Australia's defence industry.

The submarine project went much further than a decision we made to replace the ageing Oberon class submarines: it is the first part of a determination to re-establish Australia's shipbuilding industry.

The second part of that commitment was to build in Australia the ANZAC class of ships for the Royal Australian Navy.

And I am pleased to say that that project is also proceeding on schedule. The submarine project was ambitious, and not without significant risks.

COLLINS is the first submarine to be built in Australia.

A whole range of new and diverse technologies for Australia had to be set up from scratch: the production of high-strength micro-alloy steel; high-technology welding; new construction methods; micro-electronics; visual and electronic optical equipment; and the manufacture of lenses and submarine periscopes.

The Australian Submarine Corporation (ASC) was awarded the prime contract in 1987.

The decision to select an Australian prime contractor reflected the Government's confidence in Australian capabilities and the Government's commitment to the policy of a self-reliant defence industry.

The fulfilment of this vision has been a tall order for Australia's manufacturing industry at a time of great change.

It has been an enormous challenge for management, the workforce, and their unions.

I am pleased to say that the companies and people concerned have met that challenge.

The result is a new defence industry culture which is now looking for opportunities elsewhere.

I pay tribute to the Australian Submarine Corporation's ability to so effectively pull this very complex project together.

ASC has successfully ensured that the submarine construction is on schedule, on cost, and meets or exceeds all performance criteria on quality, Australian industry involvement, employment opportunities, and technology transfer.

ASC is exceeding its Australian industry involvement goal of 45% for the combat system work and 70% for the balance of the contract.

Of the contract price of about \$4 billion, more than \$3 billion will be returned to Australian industry.

Put simply, ASC has built the most advanced conventionally-powered submarine in the world, and a lot of people deserve credit and congratulations.

Among many other things the success of the project represents a major industrial relations achievement. Before work commenced management and unions negotiated a three-union on-site workforce.

And more recently, they have negotiated a two-year Enterprise Agreement based on productivity improvements.

The workers, their unions and management are to be congratulated on their example to Australian industry.

We should also credit the South Australian government's foresight in backing the project.

It goes without saying that their initiative has brought great benefits to the people of South Australia.

The Corporation's fabrication and assembly work, together with component manufacture by South Australian industry, accounts for an injection of \$1.8 billion into the South Australian economy over a period of 14 years.

Over 1000 new jobs have been created at the Australian Submarine Corporation.

And several thousand other Australians have gained work through sub-contracts.

The ASC, of course, has not done this alone, as the presence of distinguished representatives from Sweden and elsewhere testifies.

The Australian Government has appreciated the strong support of the Swedish Government and the assistance provided by the Royal Swedish Navy to the project.

Their support exemplifies the cooperation that can be achieved between two countries in a joint venture. Without this level of cooperation, I doubt that we could have achieved today's success.

Minister Bjork,

I would like to express to you Australia's most sincere appreciation for the strong support provided by your government in ensuring the success of this project.

I am sure that you are as proud of Kockums' performance as we are proud of the Australian Submarine Corporation.

We look forward to continued close cooperation as we both seek to reap the full benefits in the international market place.

The construction of this submarine is an outstanding example of what can be achieved when Australia embarks on truly international joint ventures.

The multinational character of the project demonstrates that, in cooperation with other countries, Australia is able to develop major new high-technology industry capabilities.

I am pleased to see here today the Ambassadors, High Commissioners, military officers and officials of the many countries involved in the project.

I am pleased also to see representatives of the East Asian region with which we seek closer defence ties.

Australia wants to develop defence industry relations with our neighbours.

I believe that such cooperation will assist the countries in our region to support their own security and defence needs, as well as assisting Australia in maintaining its industry skills.

The Collins class submarines increase our confidence in our ability to defend ourselves, and illustrate how, through joint cooperation ventures Australian industry can contribute to the security needs of our neighbours, and help increase regional security and stability.

These shipbuilding projects, and other defence acquisition programs, such as Over the Horizon Radar and high-technology communications programs, are clear evidence that Australia's industry and technological base is diversifying.

Shipbuilding involves the entire spectrum of technology-based skills and capabilities - including project management, information and communication systems, electronics, software, electro-optics, integrated logistics support and perhaps most importantly, customer service.

Australia's defence industry may never be totally self-sufficient. It will continue to rely to a certain extent on overseas technology.

But there is no question that Australia has developed specific skills and capabilities that are world class and internationally competitive.

And I believe that these skills and experience will enable us to assist regional countries in their defence needs.

It is fitting that the first submarine, and the class title, take their name from Vice Admiral Sir John Collins.

This is the first time that Australian naval vessels have been named after officers and sailors who have served their country and their navy with great distinction.

Both the submarines and the their namesakes represent the highest standards of Australian professionalism.

Sir John Collins entered the Royal Australian Naval College in 1913 when he was 14 years of age and from where he began a long and distinguished career in the Royal Australian Navy.

Sir John Collins saw service in both the First and Second World Wars.

As Captain of HMAS SYDNEY in the Second World War in the Mediterranean, he engaged two Italian light cruisers, sinking one and forcing the second to withdraw damaged.

During the Pacific War, Sir John Collins returned to help in the defence of Australia.

As Commander of the Australian Squadron, he attended the surrender of Japan in September 1945.

He was later promoted to Vice Admiral, and created a Knight Commander of the Order of the British Empire.

Sir John Collins served Australia marvellously well, and I am sure HMAS Collins will too.

Australia can develop the most advanced technology and manufacture technologically complex equipment, on time, within cost, and to world-class standards for quality.

The challenge of the future is to ensure that this new defence industry capability is maintained and further developed for the benefit of Australia and regional countries.

I congratulate the Australian Submarine Corporation and the people who built HMAS Collins; the Swedish company, Kockums; Rockwell Systems Australia; all other sub-contractors; suppliers and the Navy.

You have all done a superb job and I know all Australians would want me to extend their warmest congratulations.

Thank you.

PORT ADELAIDE  
28 August 1993

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