

**David Harris**

Minister for Aboriginal Affairs and Treaty, Minister for Gaming and Racing,  
Minister for Veterans, Minister for Medical Research, Minister for the Central Coast

**Media Release****Second World War veterans remembered on VP Day****Tuesday, 15 August 2023**

Today marks the 78<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the end of the Second World War – Victory in the Pacific - with commemorative services being held across NSW and around the world.

Australia had been at war for five years, 11 months and 11 days when on 15 August 1945, Japan accepted the Allied Nations' terms of surrender and Australia's Prime Minister, Ben Chifley, confirmed that the war was over.

Minister for Veterans David Harris who attended the commemorative service at the Cenotaph today, alongside RSL NSW President Ray James and members of the veteran community paid tribute to the service and sacrifice of all Second World War veterans.

"Today on VP Day we come together to remember all those men and women who served – in the ranks of our Navy, Army, Air Force, the Merchant Navy and nursing – and thank them for their sacrifices, in conflict and in captivity. "It's a date, we will never forget, Mr Harris said.

"We honour those who served, and the 39,000 Australians who made the ultimate sacrifice for the cause of peace and freedom."

Australian forces were engaged in campaigns across the Pacific – in New Guinea, Bougainville, New Britain, Borneo, and in the Philippines – and Australian prisoners of the Japanese were spread throughout Asia.

RSL NSW President Ray James OAM, said commemorating significant moments in our military history is vital to Australia, as people, a community and a nation.

"People should never forget how close we as a nation came to invasion and occupation during the second World War," Mr James said.

"But for the service and sacrifice of the men and women who served in our armed forces, and those of the Allied Forces, the Australian people would not have been protected from the battles of the war reaching our shores.

Second World War veteran Don Kennedy, who had his first taste in the Merchant Navy in February 1944 at the age of 16, cruising out through the Heads on the *Seirstad* destined for the Atlantic also attended the commemoration.

Even though Don Kennedy wasn't trained to fight in the war or even acknowledged as a member of the services at the time, the commitment he and others made in the Merchant Navy was no less significant.

"I tell people I was 17 months in the war. There was only half an inch of metal between you and the sea if a torpedo struck the ship." Don Kennedy said.

Don Kennedy was one of many veterans who shared their story in 2020 to commemorate the 75th anniversary of the end of the Second World War. View the veterans' stories [here](#).

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