

MEDIA RELEASE

**Minister for Juvenile Justice
Minister for Youth
Minister for Volunteering
Minister Assisting the Premier on Veterans' Affairs
The Hon. Graham West MP**



Thursday 3 September 2009

ROLE OF MERCHANT NAVY ACKNOWLEDGED

Minister Assisting the Premier on Veterans' Affairs, Graham West, said the Australian Red Ensign would today fly on the Sydney Harbour Bridge from dawn to dusk, in commemoration of Merchant Navy Day.

Mr West said Merchant Navy Day officially commemorates the service of merchant seamen who served Australia in wartime.

"Today provides a time for Australians to reflect on the service of the Merchant Navy and their important role in Australia's military past," Mr West said.

"Thousands of Australian merchant mariners served during the two World Wars on Australian, Commonwealth and Allied ships, as well as merchant ships from other nations.

"During the Second World War the Merchant Navy evacuated civilians from threatened areas, and transported supplies and personnel between areas of conflict, often while under attack.

"Merchant Navy Day was declared by the Federal Governor-General, Major General Michael Jeffery AC CVO MC (Retd), in 2008 - to be 3 September each year.

"The date for Merchant Navy Day was chosen by the ex-service community to mark the loss of the first Allied merchant ship in the Second World War, which occurred the day war was declared in 1939.

"It is a day of national observance to commemorate the service and sacrifice of Australia's merchant mariners.

"Australian and Commonwealth memorials commemorate 435 Australians who paid the ultimate sacrifice serving in the Merchant Navy."

"It is estimated that one in eight Australian merchant mariners lost their lives during the two World Wars," Mr West added.

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