PRIME MINISTER

<u>MESSAGE FROM THE PRIME MINISTER</u>

SYDNEY EMDEN 100 CENTENARY MEMORIAL SERVICE

I am pleased to provide this message for the Sydney Emden Centenary Memorial Service and inauguration of the Sydney I – Emden I Friendship Mast.

I especially acknowledge the presence of descendants of those who served on HMAS *Sydney* and SMS *Emden*.

On this centenary, we remember the battle between HMAS *Sydney* and the German raider SMS *Emden* that took place on 9 November 1914.

The ANZAC convoy was steaming across the Indian Ocean when a distress call was received from the Cocos Islands: "S.O.S. Strange warship approaching". The danger was high with some 28,500 Australian and New Zealand troops on ships nearby, headed to Egypt.

HMAS *Sydney* answered the call for help and, just after 9am, spotted SMS *Emden*. Guns fired across the water and a battle ensued. *Sydney* was the victor – the *Emden* was lost.

The Captain of HMAS *Sydney*, John Glossop RN, dispatched a letter to the Captain of SMS *Emden*, Karl von Müller, that said:

"*In the event of you surrendering, in which I venture to remind you is no disgrace but rather your misfortune, I will endeavour to do all I can for your sick and wounded and take them to a hospital.*"

The German wounded were cared for and any malice between two foes was replaced by a mutual respect for each other.

This was the first victory by a ship of the Royal Australian Navy and it ensured the safety of the ANZAC convoy. It was a victory, but also a loss: four men died on *Sydney* and 134 died on the *Emden*.

In that early, definitive moment, nobody could have imagined the years that would follow and the sacrifices that would be made.

The Centenary of the Great War does not glorify war, but it should commemorate what is best in our human character and acknowledge that the worst of times can bring out the best in us.

The Hon Tony Abbott MP
Prime Minister of Australia

6 November 2014