



PAPUA NEW GUINEA ASSOCIATION OF AUSTRALIA Inc

And the RABAUL and MONTEVIDEO MARU Group

Former Army Chief David Morrison AO Australian of the Year 2016

The Rabaul and Montevideo Maru Memorial Group together with the Papua New Guinea Association of Australia Inc congratulates former army chief David Morrison AO who has been named 2016 Australian of the Year.



L-R: Rear Admiral Ken Doolan AO, RAN; Lt Gen David Morrison, the Hon Peter Garrett and Phillip Ainsworth

General Morrison was keynote speaker at the 70th Anniversary Rabaul and Montevideo Maru Commemorative Luncheon in Canberra on 30 June 2012, prior to the dedication of the Rabaul and Montevideo National Memorial at the Australian War Memorial.

His outstanding and memorable speech began with:

'Veterans, families of those who were lost on the Montevideo Maru, distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen...

War is a terrible thing. It reaps souls and lives un-lived and leaves waste, sorrow and broken years in its wake. Too often our remembrance can appear to give more emphasis to the nobility of sacrifice, rather than face the anguish and deep personal sorrow such sacrifice demands of those who go on living. At times, our ceremonies can gloss over the mistakes that are made in war, but mistakes and miscalculations are intrinsic to battle because war is solely a human endeavour.

That is not the case today, for at this gathering we remember one of the most tragic episodes in the annals of Australian military history. The sinking of the requisitioned transport vessel, the Montevideo Maru, by an American submarine, the USS Sturgeon, forty miles West of Luzon on the 1st of July 1942 was the culmination of a chain of disastrous strategic and tactical decisions.

No official passenger manifests have yet surfaced to confirm this but it is believed that 845 military prisoners of war and 208 civilian internees from Rabaul perished when the ship went down.'

General Morrison's empathy was seen with:

'We can only imagine the heartbreak of those wives, parents, sons and daughters when at the war's end their men-folk could not be found when Rabaul was recaptured. Indeed, when Australian troops arrived in July 1945 they could only account for a mere four civilian survivors and a handful of missionaries from the Vunapope mission.'

...

The troops of the Rabaul Garrison, comprised primarily of men of the 2/22nd Battalion AIF, bore the brunt of these losses. Many of them had been induced to surrender by Japanese pamphlets assuring them that they would be treated in accordance with the Geneva Conventions only to be promptly and callously executed in the Tol Plantation south of Rabaul.'

The highlight of General Morrison's speech to the 640 people attending the luncheon was his statement:

'It was folly to send token forces to Rabaul to wave the flag and far too many brave young Australians paid the ultimate price for it. The dead of the Montevideo Maru silently rebuke Australia and remind us some 70 years later of the consequences of neglect of the nation's Defence - that paramount obligation of the state to its people.'

To read his full speech at the 70th Anniversary Rabaul and Montevideo Maru Commemorative Luncheon in Canberra in 2012, please see:

<http://www.memorial.org.au/About/MorrisonSpeech.htm>

General Morrison, 59, was deployed to Bougainville in 1994.

He is now the chair of the Diversity Council Australia will put gender equality and workplace diversity at the top of the national agenda.



Don Hook with General Morrison perusing a display of the Salvation Army Band, all but one of whom were on the Montevideo Maru



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