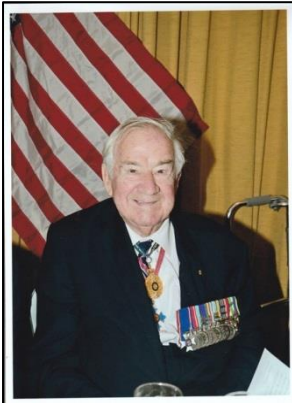


## Vice Admiral David Leach AC, CBE, LVO, RAN (Ret)

July 17, 1928 – January 19, 2020



Vice Admiral David Willoughby Leach AC, CBE, LVO served as Chief of the Naval Staff from 1982 to 1985.

David Willoughby Leach was born on July 17, 1928 in Perth, Western Australia.

Cadet Midshipman Leach joined the RAN College in January 1942, aged 13. During his time at the college he was appointed Chief Cadet Captain and was awarded the King's Gold Medal for exemplary conduct.

In 1946-47 Leach served in Royal Navy ships of the British Pacific Fleet before completing his Sub Lieutenant courses in the United Kingdom in 1948. While training in the UK as a Gunnery Specialist he obtained a private pilot's licence.

When he returned to Australia he served in HMA Ships Australia (II), Murchison and Arunta (I), and in 1960-61, after specialising in gunnery, he served in the RAN flagship HMAS Melbourne (II) as the Fleet Gunnery Officer. As a Lieutenant he played State Representative Rugby for Victoria.

Command appointments followed in HMAS Vendetta (II) (1964-66) with the Far East Strategic Reserve and as the captain of HMAS Perth (II) during her second deployment to the Vietnam War between September 1968 and April 1969. Perth was an efficient and effective ship providing swift and accurate fire on enemy positions from the gunline. On one occasion Perth was the target of 30 rounds of counter battery fire from North Vietnamese gunners. Due to rapid ship handling none of the incoming shells found their target. This deployment earned Perth a US Meritorious Unit Citation which was presented to the ship by the US Ambassador Mr WL Rice on 28 August 1970.

In recognition of his personal distinguished service and devotion to duty in the presence of the enemy during Perth's deployment, Leach was appointed a Commander of the Order of the British Empire (CBE) in 1969.

Captain Leach served as Director of Naval Plans (1969-70), and was the RAN's representative in the UK (1971-74). In 1970 he was appointed a Lieutenant of the Royal Victorian Order (LVO) for his services as Liaison Officer during the Royal visit to Australia.

Promoted Commodore in 1975 Leach served in Navy Office, Canberra, as the Director of Naval Plans, Director General of Naval Operational Requirements (1975-76), Chief of Naval Materiel and Chief of Naval Personnel.

Captain Leach was the Australian Naval Representative in the United Kingdom (1971-1974). He returned to Britain and completed the UK's Senior Staff Course Royal College of Defence Studies (1977).

On promotion to Rear Admiral he was Assistant Chief of Naval Staff - Materiel (1978-79), Flag Officer commanding the Australian Fleet (1979-80), and Assistant Chief of Naval Staff - Personnel (1980-81). In 1981 he was made an Officer of the Order of Australia (AO), for his service as Commander of the Australian Fleet.

On promotion to Vice Admiral in April 1982 he became Chief of Naval Staff. In 1984 he was promoted to Companion of the Order of Australia (AC), for services to the RAN particularly as Chief of Naval Staff.

His naval career concluded on his retirement in 1985 after three years in command of the RAN.

After retirement in 1985 Vice Admiral Leach continued to give significant public service as a member of the Council of the Australian War Memorial and as a Member of the Administrative Appeals Tribunal. He also served as an Alderman and then Mayor of Woollahra, NSW, where he lived and was Patron of the U.S. Army Small Ships Association.

Throughout his distinguished career, and later life, Vice Admiral Leach gave great service to the nation and the Navy. During his 43 year career he exemplified Navy values in peace and war and made major contributions to the modern navy through his command and leadership at sea and ashore. Former Chief of Naval Staff Vice Admiral David Leach was the last former Chief of Naval Staff to have served in the RAN during the Second World War.

Vice Admiral Leach passed away in Sydney on 19 January 2020.