

1914 Victory at Sea on Cocos Islands Stamps

Australia's first victory at sea during World War I is commemorated in a new stamp release by Australia Post. Australia Post Philatelic Manager, Michael Zsolt said this wartime event is historically significant as it was the first engagement fought by a warship of the fledgling Royal Australian Navy.

"The 'Battle of Cocos Islands', as it's sometimes described, took place on 9 November 1914 when the Australian light cruiser HMAS *Sydney* responded to an attack by the German light cruiser SMS *Emden* on a communications station at Direction Island in the Cocos (Keeling) Islands," Mr Zsolt said.

"We trust these stamps will remind all Australians of the significance of this important wartime engagement which took place in the waters of what is now one of Australia's external territories."

While *Emden* was the first to fire, *Sydney's* more powerful guns resulted in *Emden's* eventual surrender after she was deliberately beached on the North Keeling Island reef. There were fatalities on both sides, including 134 crew from *Emden* and four from *Sydney*.

Australia had a vital interest in bringing *Emden* to her end as the vessel's raiding activities in the Indian Ocean put at risk Australia's exports of wool, wheat and gold to the United King-



dom as well as the despatch of tens of thousands of young men joining the war effort. The battle, when it came, was short and bloody, an emphatic first victory at sea for the newborn Royal Australian Navy.

Historic photographs of HMAS *Sydney* and SMS *Emden* are featured on the 70c stamp and the \$3.50 stamp,

respectively.

The stamps were designed by Melbourne-based designer Stacey Zass of page 12 design company.

The Centenary of the Sydney/Emden Engagement stamp release includes a special prestige cover that includes a facsimile of a letter from on board HMAS *Sydney*.

The new stamp issue comprises one domestic base-rate (70c) stamp and one large-letter-rate (\$3.50) stamp. The associated products also include a first day cover and a postal and numismatic cover.

The stamps of Cocos (Keeling) Islands are issued under the auspices of Australia Post. Cocos Islands stamps and are also valid in Australia.

The Centenary of the Sydney/Emden Engagement stamp issue is available at www.auspost.com.au/stamps from October 14, 2014, or contact Australia Stamp Agency in North America toll free (USA and Canada) at 1-800-443-4225 while stocks last.