



## **Golden Princess Marks 75th Anniversary of the Battle of the Coral Sea**

May 8, 2017

A poignant remembrance service was held onboard Golden Princess yesterday as the ship sailed off far northern Queensland, 75 years to the day since the closing stages of the pivotal Battle of the Coral Sea, regarded as the turning point of the war in the Pacific.

Guests and crew alike paused for the service to remember those who died in the biggest naval battle ever to take place near Australia and the first in naval history where two opposing fleets at no stage came within sight of each other.

The battle raged for four days from May 4-8 in 1942 and was the first clash to halt the advance of Japanese forces reducing the immediate threat to Australia and setting the scene for the Battle of Midway, a clear cut Allied victory, a month later.

"Golden Princess' current itinerary to Papua New Guinea and South Pacific destinations placed the ship off the far north coast of Queensland between Australia, PNG and the Solomon Islands on the 75th anniversary of the climactic day of the Battle of the Coral Sea," Princess Cruises Vice President Australia and New Zealand Stuart Allison said.

"The Battle of the Coral Sea was a pivotal moment in history and paved the way for the alliance between Australia and the United States, which endures to this day. For our Australian and American guests, the remembrance service was an opportunity to pay tribute to those who made the supreme sacrifice at a time of great peril for Australia," Mr Allison said.

"But it is also comforting for our guests in knowing that with the passage of time the protagonists in the battle are now firm friends and international allies."

Two Royal Australian Navy ships, HMAS Australia and HMAS Hobart, were part of the joint US and Australian naval force involved in the series of naval engagements over the four days of the battle.

At the time, the events of May 1942 were being followed very closely by the Australian Government with Prime Minister John Curtin making an historic statement to the Parliament as the outcome of the battle hung in the balance.

"A great naval battle is proceeding in the south west Pacific area," Mr Curtin told Parliament. "Nobody can tell what the result of the engagement may be. If it should go advantageously, we shall have cause for great gratitude and our position will then be a little clearer. But if we should not have the advantages from this battle for which we hope, all that confronts is a sterner ordeal, a greater and graver responsibility."

During yesterday's remembrance service on Golden Princess, war veterans and currently serving members of the armed services played a central role.

"It was a privilege for Golden Princess to be in vicinity of the Battle of the Coral Sea for the 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary and an honour to pay tribute to brave sailors and airmen who secured our freedom," Mr Allison said.