

# Commitment to strong Customs Service

**T**he Australian Customs Vessel *Roebuck Bay* symbolised the Commonwealth Government's commitment to a strong Customs service, to protection of Australia's borders and our Exclusive Economic Zone and to the fight against drugs, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Trade, Mr Tim Fischer, said on 27 March 1999. Mr Fischer was speaking at Austal Ships Pty Ltd, near Fremantle, at the commissioning of the ACV *Roebuck Bay*.

*The Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Trade, Mr Tim Fischer, swaps his famous hat for a Customs cap to cheer on the new vessel. He is pictured at the commissioning ceremony with the Minister for Justice and Customs, Senator Amanda Vanstone and Roebuck Bay's Officer-in-Command, Bradley Mulcahy.*



"This vessel, the first of eight with a range of over 1000 nautical miles, will work up to 200 miles off shore for up to three weeks at a time," he said.

"Some of its most exciting and dangerous work will involve drug interdiction similar to the massive heroin and cocaine seizures on the east coast of Australia last year.

"It will be a vital component of the Commonwealth Government's *Tough on Drugs* strategy which the Prime Minister has launched.

"However, more of its time will be spent working with agencies such as the Australian Fisheries Management Authority, protecting our valuable fish stocks; the Australian Quarantine and Inspection Service, protecting our borders from animal and plant diseases; the Department of Immigration and Multicultural Affairs, deterring illegal immigration; the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority; Environment Australia; and the Australian Federal Police.

"In addition, it will continue to work with State agencies, particularly fisheries and environment agencies, and most importantly State police forces. Together these agencies cover a range of responsibilities which most Australians would agree are, one way or the other, an important part of our way of life – and this vessel will be involved in all of that.

"Austal Ships won the contract to build this vessel and seven sister ships against very tough competition from Queensland and Tasmania. I understand there has already been signifi-



cant international interest in this new class of relatively lightweight, low cost, high performance patrol boat.

"Looking around this shipyard I am not surprised when I see vessels under construction for countries such as Denmark, Ireland, Germany, New Caledonia and Norway. To Austal's credit all of these contracts have been won against tough international competition.

"Austal is a success story not just in terms of the ships it builds and exports, but also for its jobs created. It has over 1100 skilled staff, 175 apprentices and trainees and a major commitment to training and quality. The fruit of this commitment is in evidence all around us."

Mr Fischer said that the vessel had been named after Roebuck Bay at

Broome. The bay was named after William Dampier's ship, the *Roebuck*, which visited the Western Australian coast in 1699, and was therefore a name with strong historical connections to WA.

"Protecting Australia's 37 000 kilometre coastline is not an easy job as recent events in Cairns demonstrate", he said. "But it is important to recognise the significant contribution that vessels such as the *Roebuck Bay* will make to that task. It is also important to recognise the contributions made by Coastwatch aerial surveillance, patrol boats of the Royal Australian Navy, Orion aircraft of the Royal Australian Air Force and all the other agencies Customs works with closely.

"Finally, I should mention the contribution to the protection of our

borders made by all Australians through the Customs Watch program. This program, which encourages people to report suspicious land, sea or air activity, to a national 1800 number has been enormously successful. It is not coastal surveillance on the cheap. It is recognition that this is a Team Australia approach. Protecting the borders of such a large country as Australia with a relatively small population can only be effectively achieved if governments and all Australians play a part.

"To formally commission the *Roebuck Bay*, I will present to the skipper, Bradley Mulcahy, the Customs flag which the vessel will fly at all times when it is operational.

"The right for Customs vessels to carry a Customs flag is enshrined in the Customs Act of 1901. While flying that flag, officers on board have powers to pursue and board ships where there is reason to believe that a vessel or its occupants have broken Australian laws or breached Australian sovereignty.

"It is therefore with pleasure that I declare the *Roebuck Bay* officially commissioned."

Official guests at the commissioning ceremony included a number of Commonwealth and State Ministers, including the Minister for Justice and Customs, Senator Amanda Vanstone, Attorney-General, Daryl Williams and Special Minister of State, Senator Chris Ellison, senior Customs officers headed by Chief Executive Officer, Lionel Woodward, and Austal Ships executives led by Chairman and Managing Director, John Rothwell.

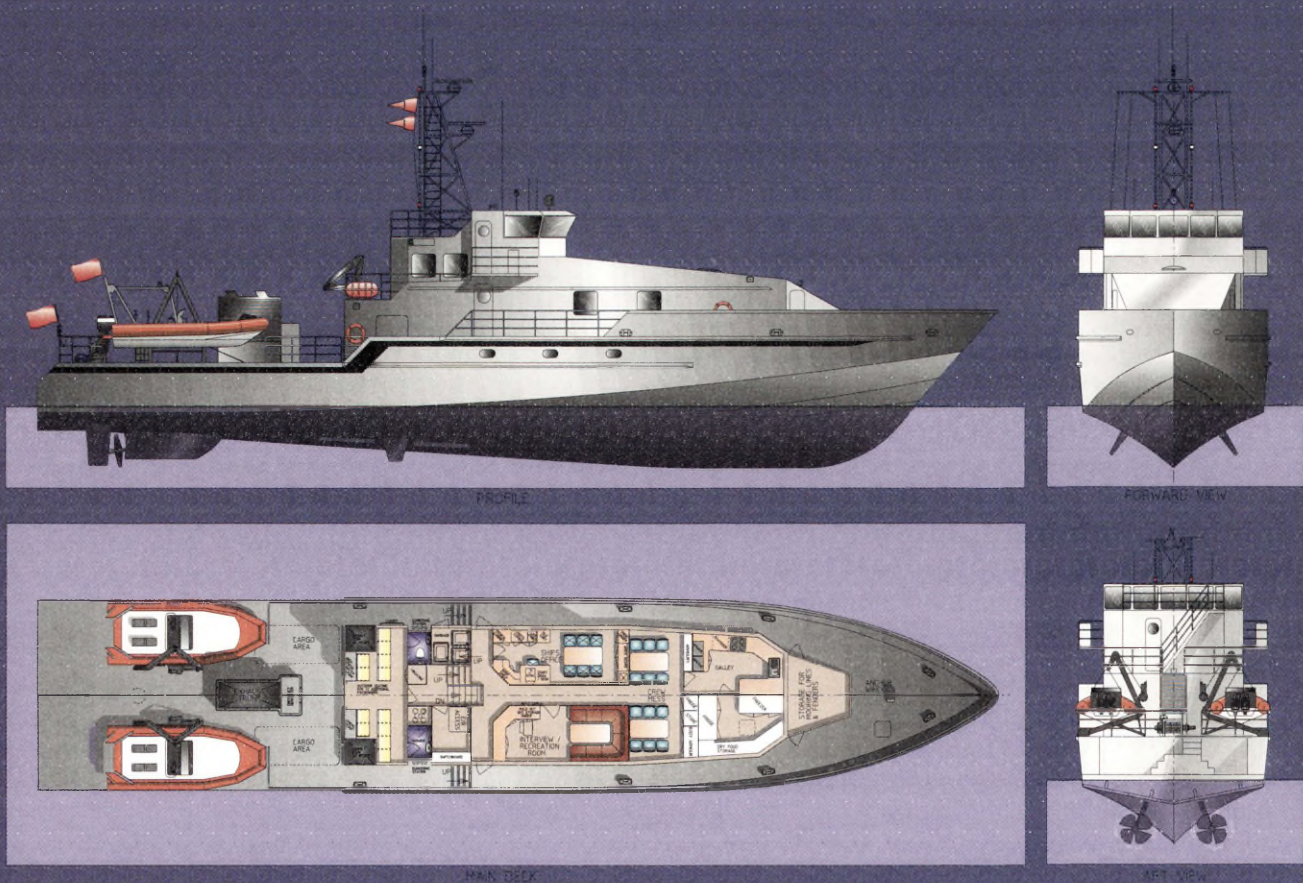
# About Roebuck Bay

**R**oebuck Bay is the first of eight Bay Class vessels being built for the Australian Customs Service by Austal Ships Pty Ltd in Western Australia. All eight are scheduled for delivery by August 2000.

The vessel is of aluminium construction and is 38 metres long with a draught of 1.9 metres. It is powered by two MTU 1050-kilowatt diesel engines, providing an endurance of more than 1000 nautical miles at 20 knots and considerably more at lower speeds. Up to nine Customs officers crew the vessel, and there is accommodation for up to another eight people.

Roebuck Bay carries two 6.4-metre aluminium response vessels that can be quickly launched for boarding, surveillance and interception. Powered by twin 67-kilowatt outboard motors, they can carry six people at speeds up to 40 knots.

Bay Class vessels have a full range of modern navigation and communication equipment. They are equipped for extended periods of service at sea.



*Drawing courtesy Austal Ships*