



AUSTRALIAN HIGH COMMISSION
NUKU'ALOFA

PRESS RELEASE

24 April 2020

**Australian Pacific Maritime Security Program continues to support His Majesty's
Armed Forces**

Yesterday, His Majesty's Naval Ship, the VOEA *Pangai*, lowered her ensign for the final time under the watchful eye of the Component Commander of the Tonga Navy, Commander Taniela Tuita. VOEA *Pangai* was commissioned by His Majesty late King Tupou IV. Her commissioning Commanding Officer was then His Royal Highness Lieutenant Commander 'Ulukalala Lavaka Ata, now His Majesty King Tupou VI.

VOEA *Pangai* saw almost 30 years of distinguished service in the Tongan Navy including peacekeeping missions in Bougainville in 1994, assistance to Niuafo'ou in 2009 following a tsunami and support to Fiji after Tropical Cyclone Winston in 2016.

The VOEA *Pangai* was gifted as part of the Pacific Patrol Boat program under through the Defence Cooperation Program, which saw Australia gift 22 vessels to Pacific Island countries between 1987 and 1997.

Australia continues to step up maritime security in the region with its recent Pacific Maritime Security Program. The program is Australia's \$2 billion commitment to the region over the next 30 years and consists of three components: Pacific Patrol Boat replacement, integrated regional aerial surveillance, and efforts to strengthen regional coordination.

Through the program, HMAF received a new guardian class patrol boat, VOEA *Ngahau Koula* (*Golden Arrow*), last year and will receive VOEA *Ngahau Siliva* later this year.