



# **Fremantle's Submarines: How Allied Submariners and Western Australians Helped to Win the War in the Pacific**

*Michael Sturma*

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From unpromising beginnings in March 1942, the Allied submarine base at Fremantle on the west coast of Australia became a vital part of the Allied offensive against Japan. Pushed back from the Philippines and the Netherlands' East Indies, American submariners, accompanied by a small group of Dutch forces, retreated to Fremantle as a last resort. The location was chosen for its good harbor and the fact that it was outside the range of land-based Japanese aircraft. Unfortunately the base was also far from their patrol areas and supply lines, and it was difficult to reinforce should the enemy attack. Thanks largely to a welcoming civilian population, morale quickly improved. The hospitality and sense of belonging fostered by Western Australians became legendary among Allied submariners and remains central to their wartime memories. Perhaps as a result of such a positive experience, the Allied forces became much more successful in combat. Intertwining social and military history, Fremantle's Submarines relates how courage, cooperation, and community made Fremantle arguably the most successful military outpost of World War II from the standpoint of troop morale.

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