Wave of business for Darwin traders with arrival of another US navy ship

Darwin businesses are enjoying a busy trade again this month with the arrival of approximately 200 US sailors who are ready for some serious rest and relaxation.

The USS Vandegrift (FFG-48) sailed into Darwin today for a scheduled visit which will enable the crew to meet locals and enjoy a few days on dry land.

The Minister for Business, Kon Vatskalis, said Darwin city traders are set to see a real boost to the local economy while the sailors are in town.

"On average, each US sailor spends an estimated $228 per day on tourism activities, dining and souvenirs during their stay in the Top End," said Mr Vatskalis.

"Darwin is a popular destination for navy ships – we’re close to Asia and provide the perfect setting for crews to recharge their batteries."

Owner of The Rugby Shop at the Mitchell Centre, Bruce Kennon, said his business experiences a consistently higher turnover when there is a ship visiting our port.

"These military ships have a very positive impact on the whole town and the crews spend across a wide range of areas," he said.

"The fact that they are usually here for a couple of days at a time is fantastic for businesses in the city - in fact my business sales increased 300% on one occasion.

"They are very polite customers to deal with, and as rugby gets more popular around the world, they love to come in and purchase jerseys, rugby souvenirs and generally learn more about rugby culture."

Mr Kennon’s rugby team, ‘Stray Cats’, will play a social game with sailors from the USS Vandegrift tomorrow evening.

"We played them socially ten years ago so it will be great to play them again," he said.

Approximately 34 foreign navy ships visit Darwin every year. The USS Vandegrift is the second US navy ship to sail into port in the past seven days.

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