

CAMBRIDGE

# ANALYSING AUSTRALIAN HISTORY

## War and Upheaval

1909–1992



Michael Adcock, Helen Smalley, Ian Keese  
and Jenny Pudney

Series editors: Richard Broome and Ashley Keith Pratt



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the traditional custodians of the lands on which our company is located and where we conduct our business. We pay our respects to  
ancestors and Elders, past and present. Cambridge University Press is committed to honouring Australian Aboriginal and Torres Strait  
Islander peoples' unique cultural and spiritual relationships to the land, waters and seas and their rich contribution to society.*

## About the cover



*Women workers in the paper room (fuse  
section), Commonwealth Explosives  
Factory, Maribyrnong, Sybil Craig, 1945.*

This large factory was established  
after World War I, and was pivotal to  
Australia's military efforts in World  
War II. To our eyes, there is nothing  
remarkable about the factory or its  
workers. In reality, both were of crucial  
importance. Both wars were long  
in duration, took many men away,  
and involved fighting heavily armed  
enemies. During World War II, women  
stepped in to do heavy, dangerous  
industrial work in order to keep our  
soldiers supplied. In one respect, you  
could say that World War II could have  
been won or lost on the factory floor, not  
just the battlefield.

# About the Indigenous Reading Project



All students, regardless of their background, need literacy skills to learn and grow as individuals. The Indigenous Reading Project aims to improve the reading ability of Indigenous students through working with school communities and families across Australia. For various reasons, the reading achievement gap between Indigenous and non-Indigenous students is still significant in Australia today. We want to change this. If you'd like to learn more about our work, please visit us at <https://irp.org.au>.

For the life of the *Analysing Australian History* series, the authors of the books will be donating their royalties to this very worthy cause, and Cambridge University Press will be also be matching this donation.

The Indigenous Reading Project acknowledges this generous support.

## Foreword

History books, like all books, are creations that have their own history. This series began in Melbourne in September 2020 during the COVID-19 lockdown. It came out of a desire by some teachers, academics and publishers at Cambridge University Press to create a series of textbooks for the new VCE Australian History Study Design – due to start in 2022 and until September 2020, having no prospect of textbooks. A rescue operation began to create four books to inform the four study investigations of the Study Design. Tight deadlines were needed to have the books designed, printed and distributed to be in students' hands for the start of 2022. All the books have been written with a heavily source-based approach so students can learn the craft of historical investigation and historical thinking.

Books owe many debts, and these are no different. Many historians gave permission for their words to be used as sources in the series. Newspaper organisations, publishers, and libraries also gave permission to use words and images in these textbooks. All are acknowledged in the appropriate places. The fifteen authors who worked on the series must be thanked for their creativity, hard and indeed excellent work in creating these magnificent textbooks. Two-thirds of the authors are practising teachers, as their biographies will show. No authors have received remuneration for this project, which they have done willingly, to assist the understanding of our history in this country. Indeed, the authors' royalties are being donated to the Indigenous Reading Project, to be matched by Cambridge University Press. Indigenous Literary Day is 1 September.

Special thank you to the following expert reviewers of the individual volumes, for their excellent and honest feedback.

*From Custodianship to the Anthropocene*: Ms Alison Quin & Professor Katie Holmes.

*Creating a Nation*: Dr Andrew Lemon & Dr Gwenda Tavan.

*Power and Resistance*: Professor Sean Scalmer & Professor Lynette Russell.

*War and Upheaval*: Hon. Assoc. Professor Judith Smart, Dr Bart Ziino, Mr Aleryk Fricker, Professor Noah Riseman & Ms Briony Parker.

Publishers Nick Alexander and Cameron Pikó must be thanked for all their enthusiasm and guidance for this project. The management at Cambridge University Press in both Australia and England must be thanked most profusely for supporting this project with no great immediate prospect of a financial return.

Richard Broome and Ashley Keith Pratt, May 2021

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# Series introduction

## AUSTRALIA'S REVOLUTIONARY HISTORY

When societies transplant themselves to new lands these fragments of the home societies are inevitably reshaped. The Romans in Britain or in Constantinople became different from those back at home in Rome. Likewise, from the fifteenth century onwards, after Europe began the process of colonisation during the Age of Exploration, the people and their ways of life in the colonies also changed from those at home. European peoples in these new lands were transformed by different environments and by clashing with original owners.

Australia's history is monumental because of how these transformations played out. It is also full of tragedy and drama, because these European immigrant peoples invaded new places with existing societies, except for the Pacific, far older than European agrarian society. In the case of Australia, the Indigenous population has been here since at least 60 000 BCE and scientific knowledge keeps pushing the date back. Many Indigenous people consider that they have always been here.

European colonists misread or misrepresented the facts before them and argued First Nations peoples were not owners, were without religion or culture, were impoverished because of their lack of physical possessions; and did not even deserve to own their land. The newcomers did not realise for generations that they were meeting a culture ten times older than their own agrarian societies, and one shaped by deeply spiritual ideas about custodianship of land.

The past is not one story, but many stories, interwoven and entangled. Misunderstandings, the injustices, the violence, the removals and dispossessions that took place for First Nations peoples created massive traumas, wrongs and human suffering that Australia is still addressing to this day. However, this European offshoot in other ways developed a magnificence of its own, which will be explored as well in this series.

Our history is not dead and gone but alive with the past, and it is this history that we must know if we are truly to know ourselves. It is a history that must be studied by someone because of its importance in the human story – and if not by we Australians, who else then on this Earth?

This series, *Analysing Australian History*, investigates through documents the key themes in our past.

From *Custodianship to the Anthropocene: 60 000 BCE to 2010* explores the ways humans have shaped, and been influenced by, the Australian landscape over tens of thousands of years. It investigates how peoples with very different ideas of the world clashed over the use of land and resources, which are the basis of all wealth and the source of our survival into the future. It also investigates how differences over the use of the environment have become a key theme of Australian society into the modern era.

*Creating a Nation: 1834–2008* examines the ways in which immigrants and their Australian-born children transformed themselves into a nation. They debated how a nation was to be forged and who was to be included in that nation. These questions still play out today in a deep and often tense manner.

*Power and Resistance: 1788–1998* investigates how power was wielded in the emerging Australian society. It explores how ideas of freedom and democracy played out (and

continue to play out) in Australia, and the implications for an imperfect society as groups struggled against that power for justice and to be recognised as equal parts of the nation.

*War and Upheaval: 1909–1992* investigates why and how Australia has been drawn into global conflicts throughout the twentieth century, as alliances shifted and new perceived threats to regional security emerged. It also explores how being drawn into these global conflicts has often led to turmoil and division within Australian society.

The four investigations in this series each have two halves: Foundations and Transformations. This recognises that Australia was settled by First Nations peoples in ancient times, then much later by colonists from Europe and in recent times immigrants from other continents. These foundations were transformed by interactions between people and land, and by the struggle by and between groups, to realise their ideas and ambitions.

Australian history is clearly revolutionary in several ways. The land was transformed by the presence of humans, both First Nations peoples and then Europeans and other newcomers after 1788. The British government usurped Aboriginal sovereignty and power after 1788, which is still being resolved. Colonists forged a democracy, which was advanced in world terms. It was an imperfect democracy, created by ideas of the day, but one forced to be more inclusive by the actions of women, by newcomers from different backgrounds to the first colonists, by First Nations peoples, and by other groups seeking inclusion.

These are some of the great dramas of our history. They are astonishing stories of struggle, trauma and transformation that should not be missed or forgotten!

Richard Broome and Ashley Keith Pratt  
Series Editors

## A note on authors

The authors, a quarter of them retired academics and three-quarter of them practising teachers, are all non-Indigenous Australians, mostly of Anglo-Celtic descent. In these histories of Australia, the authors must write about all Australians, of all descents. They have tried to do this fairly and using historical methodology, which enjoins historians to try to understand, not judge, those in the past. The effort to understand others, to stand in their shoes so to speak, is done by seeking their voices in historical documents, if they can be found. The volumes are documentary based, so where possible the voices of First Nations peoples, immigrants and Australians of diverse backgrounds have been presented to readers. The authors have tried to be aware of their own ideas and values, and where possible to allow students to find their own meanings in the documents through questions and learning activities. Each volume has been reviewed by First Nations educators.

The Victorian Year 12 Study Design 2022–2026, to which these volumes are closely matched, was devised by an expert educational team and checked by many people, including the Victorian Aboriginal Education Association Inc and teacher forums.

## A note on terminology

How people are defined or define themselves changes over time and within different contexts. We need to understand which terms to use and when. The four texts in the series *Analysing Australian History* will use ‘Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples’ (as in the Victorian Curriculum Assessment Authority History Study Design 2022–2026), where appropriate. However, in the nineteenth century few Torres Strait Islander people lived in mainland Australia, and less so in southern and western parts of the continent. They are more present in the second half of each book. Other words for Indigenous peoples will also be used in the books.

**Local words:** The original owners will be referred to where possible by their own local language group names that stem from traditional times, such as Eora, Wiradjuri and Woiwurrung. This is the preferred position, but of course the spelling of these names varies. Also, local names will be used that have been acquired, employed and accepted by Indigenous people since colonial contact, often from names of places where they have lived – for instance, Coranderrk, La Perouse or Palm Island people.

**Regional words:** When the need arises to describe those in wider regions, Aboriginal names that are widely, but not universally, accepted by original owners since contact may sometimes be used. These include names such as Koori, Murri, Yolgnu, Nyoongar and Nyungah for those of the south-east, north-east, north, west and southern parts of the continent respectively. Those in Tasmania now refer to themselves as Palawa.

**National words:** When all original owners are referred to, which is necessary in a continent-wide study, we must use European-derived words. No Indigenous word existed in pre-European contact times for all traditional owners across the country, as groups had no need for one.

Therefore, these books will use interchangeably: Aboriginal peoples, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, First Nations peoples, Indigenous peoples, original owners, traditional owners, Aboriginal Australians and Indigenous Australians, where the context is appropriate, to describe all those whom Canadians succinctly refer to as ‘First Nation’ or Aboriginal peoples. Aboriginal people also sometimes refer to themselves as blacks, blackfellas or people of colour. However, some of these terms may be considered offensive by First Nations peoples if used by non-Indigenous people.

### A NOTE ON THE WORDS ‘ABORIGINAL/ABORIGINE’

A frequently used term in these texts is Aboriginal people(s). The word ‘aborigine/aboriginal’ comes from the Latin phrase *ab origine* (meaning ‘from the beginning’). It emerged in seventeenth-century English to mean ‘the original inhabitants of a land’. As an English word of that era, it also became a colonial word to mean Indigenous people, as opposed to colonists.

The words ‘aboriginal’, ‘aborigine’ and their plurals did not become common until the 1840s and existed along with ‘blacks’ and ‘natives’ (see p.x). The word ‘aboriginal’ and its other forms did not overtake ‘native’ in common usage until the late nineteenth century.

For much of its usage life, the word ‘aboriginal’ was used without a capital ‘A’, which gave it a derogatory edge. However, it has been capitalised conventionally since

the 1960s, revealing a new respect. It is now embraced by most Indigenous people, especially its derivative form ‘Aboriginality’, which relates to the politics of identity. ‘Aboriginal people(s)’, which is used most often in these texts, is now the preferred term over ‘Aborigines’ or ‘Aboriginals’ and is used interchangeably with ‘First Nations’ or ‘Indigenous Australians’.

The word ‘indigenous’ means ‘originating from’ so anyone born in Australia is indigenous to the country. The capital ‘I’ is used to refer to First Nations Australians.

## **‘NATIVE’ AND OTHER UNACCEPTABLE WORDS**

The word ‘aboriginal’ was not at first used in Australia. The English discoverer of the east Australian coast, James Cook, who claimed the continent for Britain in 1770, called the original owners ‘natives’ and occasionally ‘Indians’. On 4 May 1816, a government proclamation used all three terms ‘natives’, ‘black natives’ and ‘Ab-origines’ in the one document, probably the first use of this last term. ‘Native’ came from the Latin word *nativus*, meaning an original inhabitant of a place. Early colonists mostly used ‘natives’, although ‘the blacks’ also came into use on the frontier, as the language of race intruded.

The word ‘native’ became derogatory but remained in common usage until the middle of the twentieth century, even in legislation. Like other unacceptable words, such as ‘half-caste’, it is deemed offensive today. The word ‘native’ will only appear where necessary in this book to show the language used and attitudes held by settlers, and only in historical sources quoted in the book. We need to see ‘native’ and other such words and ideas as settler terms of abuse, used to denigrate and silently argue in favour of settlers’ claims to Australia.

There are other derogatory words that have been used against other minority groups in Australia, especially towards immigrants, which are also avoided in these books, except if necessary in a historical source to show attitudes. They are also terms of abuse used to assert dominance. The changing use of words reveals the journey all Australians are on to a more tolerant and accepting future.

## **WORD USE FOR NON-INDIGENOUS PEOPLES**

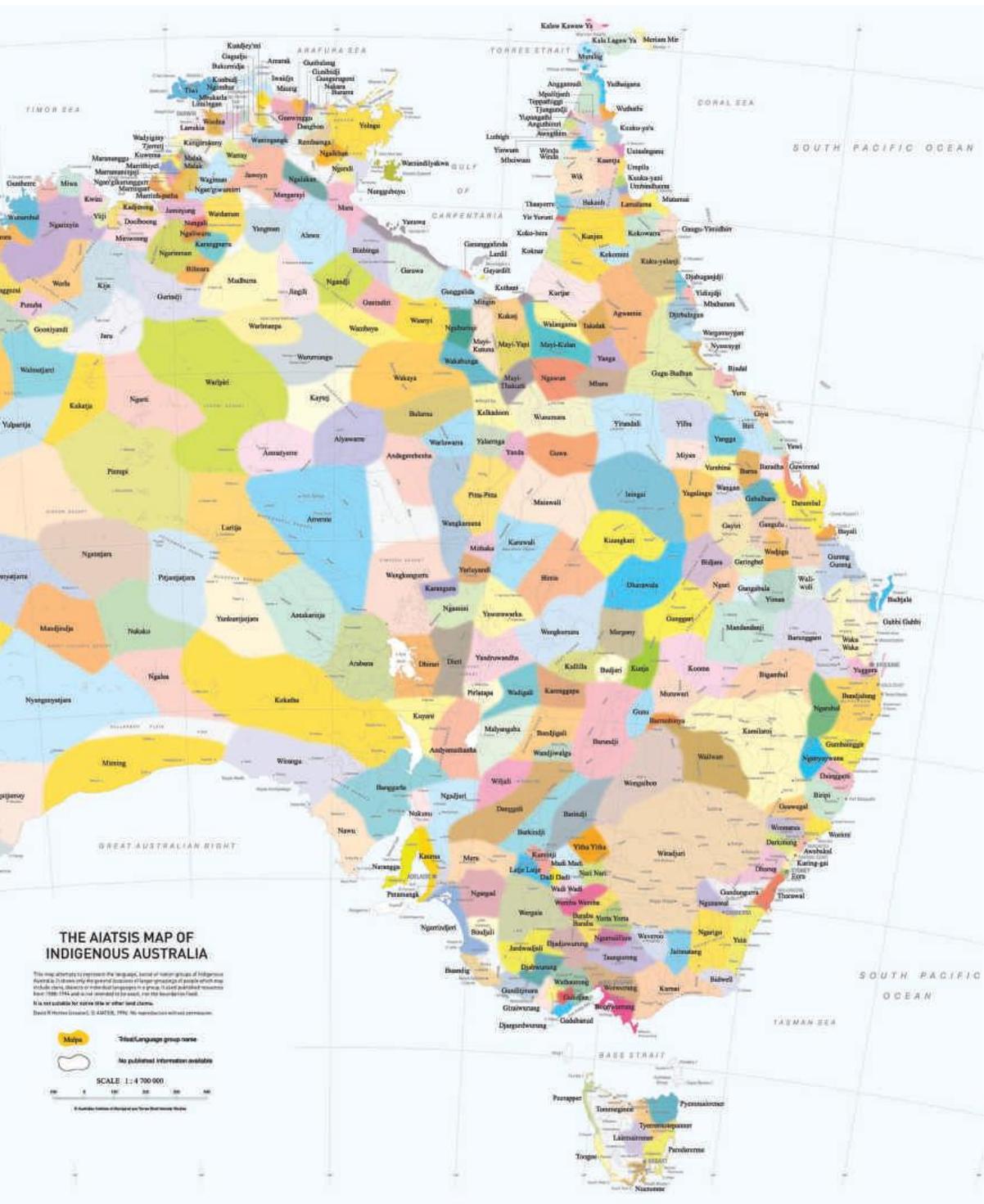
Those who came to this continent (called Australia from about 1813) to colonise will be called settlers, immigrants, whites, non-Indigenous people, Europeans, Asians, Africans, South Americans, or the name specific to the country from which they came, for instance British, Italians, Chinese, Sudanese and so forth, as the context demands.

# The AIATSIS map of Indigenous Australia

Beneath your feet are layers of history. We all stand on the traditional lands of First Nations peoples, which were never ceded. This map shows the groups of custodians for all local regions across Australia.



→ **Source** David R Horton (creator), © AIATSIS, 1996. No reproduction without permission. To purchase a print version visit: [www.aiatsis.ashop.com.au/](http://www.aiatsis.ashop.com.au/).



This map attempts to represent the language, social or nation groups of Aboriginal Australia. It shows only the general locations of larger groupings of people which may include clans, dialects or individual languages in a group. It used published resources from 1788-1994 and is not intended to be exact, nor the boundaries fixed. It is not suitable for native title or other land claims. David R Horton (creator), © AIATSI'S, 1996. No reproduction without permission. To purchase a print version visit: <https://shop.aiatsis.gov.au/>

## About the authors

**RICHARD BROOME** (*series editor*) AM, FAHA, FRHSV is an Emeritus Professor in History at La Trobe University and president of the Royal Historical Society of Victoria. He has authored fifteen books, including the award-winning *Aboriginal Victorians: a history since 1800* (2005), and the bestselling *Aboriginal Australians: a history since 1788* (5th ed., 2019). Richard, patron of the History Teachers' Association of Victoria (2013–2022), has lectured to Year 10+ teachers and students since 1974, also writing the VCE text *Colonial Experience*, published in four editions (1998–2016). He served on the Victorian Curriculum and Assessment Authority's revision of the Study Design in 2013, which became the 2016–2020 Study Design.

I thank my creative fellow authors, the very professional team at Cambridge and my wife, Margaret Donnan, and family for their patience and support.

**ASHLEY KEITH PRATT** (*series editor*) is a passionate history educator with extensive experience teaching history in addition to senior curriculum leadership roles. Ashley has completed postgraduate research in history education at the University of Melbourne and has contributed to curriculum design in Victoria through VCAA review panels for VCE History. Ashley is vice-president of the History Teachers' Association of Victoria (HTAV), a contributor to the HTAV journal *Agora*, a VCAA assessor for VCE History exams and a previous author for Cambridge University Press for Years 7 to 10 humanities projects.

Firstly, I would like to thank my co-editor Richard Broome for his enthusiasm, generosity, and passion for this project. I would also like to thank the entire team at Cambridge University Press, especially Nick Alexander and Cameron Pikó, without them this project would never have happened. Finally to my family, their support makes these small contributions I can make possible.

**MICHAEL ADCOCK** (*author*) is a history teacher at a school in Melbourne. He is also a lecturer, author and tour guide who specialises in the social and cultural history of France. He regularly presents illustrated lectures for the History Teachers' Association of Victoria (HTAV), Modern History Seminars (Sydney) and the National Gallery of Victoria. His published works focus on the history of the French Revolution, and include a recent work on the Enlightenment. He is also the tour leader for Academy Travel (Sydney), and conducts residential study tours in French history in Paris, and in the Russian Revolution in St Petersburg and Moscow.

I would like to acknowledge, with the warmest gratitude, the magnificent contribution of colleagues to my chapters in this book. Professor Richard Broome unstintingly dedicated his time to editing and improving my work. Dr. Sam Furphy unhesitatingly shared his scholarship on the topic of the experiences of First Nations peoples in Australia during the world wars. His expertise in this field allowed me, as an author and historian, to participate in the process of Truth Telling, which remains so important to the writing of our national history. Professor Bart Ziino lavished many hours to add his extraordinary professional expertise and knowledge to these chapters. Helen Smalley stepped in

promptly and most efficiently with additional research when publishing deadlines were looming. Finally, I would like to pay tribute to publisher, Nick Alexander. This beautiful book is a tribute to his very considerable intellectual and administrative skills.

**HELEN SMALLEY** (*author*) came late to teaching after a career in the insurance industry. After completing a Bachelor of Arts degree with first-class honours in History at Monash University (2001) and a Diploma of Education (2002), she taught History, Humanities and English for 16 years. For much of that time, Helen taught senior History (including Australian History) and English. She has been a VCAA assessor for Australian History and English. In 2014 and 2015, Helen was a member of the Study Design Review Panels for Units 1 and 2: Twentieth Century History and Units 3 and 4: Australian History. Helen has presented at conferences for the History Teachers Association of Victoria and the VCAA.

Thanks to my co-writers Jenny and Ian, and Nick Pudney for his assistance. It's been a pleasure collaborating with you on such an important project. We acknowledge the invaluable contribution of our reviewers.

**IAN KEESE** (*author*) has degrees in Science from the University of NSW and an Honours Degree in History from the University of Sydney. He taught for 37 years, including 30 years as Head of History Faculties. He has also been a major contributor to a variety of textbooks for Junior and Senior Secondary students. He has been seconded to Education Departments in the areas of Assessment and Curriculum, and has been an examiner for the NSW HSC. He has been a presenter for the HTAV and other organisations and has been published in *Agora* and other Education and History Journals. He was made a Fellow of the Australian College of Educators for his contributions to education.

It has been a great pleasure working with Helen, Jenny and Nick and I hope teachers and students get as much enjoyment out of this as we did.

**JENNY PUDNEY** (*author*) has been a teacher for over 10 years. She has taught VCE Australian History and English and has presented at HTAV Student Lectures and History Teaching Professional Learning Workshops.

Thank you to Helen and Ian, I also wish to thank and acknowledge Nick Pudney for his significant research, feedback and contribution to the book.

# How to use this textbook

## TEXTBOOK STRUCTURE

Each book in the series is closely aligned to the VCAA's VCE History: Australian History study design for implementation from 2022. The books are divided into two Area of Study sections, titled Foundations and Transformations. Chapters are presented in a chronological narrative format. Each chapter covers the Key knowledge from the curriculum, including the key events, ideas, perspectives and experiences specified in the study design. The final chapter of each Area of Study specifically covers the changes and continuities of the time period in question.

## AREA OF STUDY AND CHAPTER OPENERS

Each Area of Study begins with an opener that contains an introduction and a timeline of key events. Chapters open with an introduction and timeline specific to the chapter.

## NARRATIVE AND HISTORICAL SOURCES

Each chapter builds up a historical narrative for students. A wide array of primary and secondary sources are included throughout each book.

## GLOSSARY TERMS AND ENDNOTES

Glossary terms are bolded in the text, and defined for you on the page in the print book. Endnotes are also included at the end of the book to give you additional information.

## ACTIVITIES

Source analysis questions are provided for both textual and visual sources. Focus questions are included in the page margins to test student comprehension of the narrative by unpacking the content.

All activities within the book are available for download as Word documents.

## CHAPTER SUMMARIES AND END-OF-CHAPTER ACTIVITIES

At the end of each chapter, you will find a dot-point chapter summary which outlines both the main ideas covered in the chapter and focuses on the various continuities and changes over the time period in question – a key theme of the study design. In addition, a range of activities which can be used for revision or assessment is included. A range of VCAA-style questions cover the curriculum's 'Key skills' list, which helps you to develop particular historical skills and your understanding of historical concepts.

All **End-of-chapter activity questions** within the book are available for download as Word documents.

## DIGITAL VERSION

There is a PDF version of the textbook available. Additional content such as downloadable worksheets, a curriculum grid and weblinks are also available for this title and are downloadable from Cambridge GO.

# Introduction

## WHY SHOULD WE STUDY WAR AND UPHEAVAL IN AUSTRALIA'S PAST?

Throughout history, people who form communities and nations that are attached to places have always been concerned about the security of their communities, their national places and their borders. It seems to be a basic human instinct to protect one's own territory, which provides sustenance and an identity. This connection with, and love of one's, country underpinned the responses of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples as their countries were invaded by British colonisers after 1788. These battles and struggles over land, which stretched across the continent for well over a century, are covered in Volumes 1 and 3 in this series.

The British colonies in the Australian continent federated in 1901. From that time, Australia increasingly took on the responsibility for its own defence. As an island, Australia has some natural protection against invasion, but this was never seen as sufficient, especially as the Australian nation was mostly British in heritage yet located in an Asian region. Loyalty to Britain and Empire, and a feeling of insecurity stemming from being situated in Asia, was a key influence in determining Australia's history in the twentieth century. The feelings of insecurity and the need to find allies was also increased by Australia's large land mass, huge coastline, and its small population. Australia has remained sparsely populated because much of the country is arid or semi-arid and unable to sustain large populations for defence.

This constant need to find allies influenced Australia's decision to join Britain's side in the distant theatres of World War I (1914–18), although loyalty and the need to prove itself as a new nation played a part as well. The fact that the fighting was conducted in the Middle East and Europe meant it was a controversial war in Australia, especially once conscription was mooted. Conscription meant that Australians might be forced to fight in an overseas war, which for some did not seem entirely relevant to Australia's defence. This led to turmoil within the nation. The subsequent upheaval led to massive social and political change. The large number of casualties increased the tensions.

Australia entered World War II (1939–45) to help defend Mother England again. For Australian troops, the fight again opened in the Middle East. However, the fight soon switched to the Asian theatres as Japan expanded into the Pacific. Australia again looked to an ally for help and reassurance, this time looking towards the United States. There was far less upheaval in Australian society over this war, due to a more cohesive view of the war from Australians. However, the level of fear was greater as this time, war reached Australian soil.

From the 1950s, Australia has participated in other wars or incidents, mostly in Asia, due to its belief in the need for forward defence and regional security. To achieve security, Australia has continued to make pacts and treaties with powerful allies, some in Asia and some elsewhere. Some of these wars, such as the Vietnam War, again have led to great upheavals in Australian society.

The study of war is not pleasant for many people, although others find it fascinating. But it is vital to study Australia at war if we are to understand the upheavals that shaped and changed Australia's social, economic and political life in the twentieth century – indeed, our very identity as a nation.

Richard Broome and Ashley Keith Pratt  
Series Editors

# Area of Study 1

## Foundations 1909–1950



By Michael Adcock

AN AUSTRALIAN SOLDIER  
OF THE GREAT WAR

**Background image:** Bedford House Cemetery is a Commonwealth War Graves Commission burial ground for the dead of the First World War located at Zillebeke, near Ypres, on the Western Front in Belgium. A gravestone for an unknown Australian soldier is pictured.

## Introduction

Australia's involvement in the two great wars of the twentieth century is, factually, a part of our history and, perhaps even more deeply, a part of our national identity, our sense of ourselves. This involvement is a matter of fact, because it really occurred, but also a matter of myth-making, because we base our sense of ourselves upon it.

We know this because, to this day, thousands of Australians make a reverent journey to Gallipoli in Turkey to commemorate the brave achievements of Australians in the disastrous conflict there during World War I, and thousands more choose to walk the Kokoda Trail in Papua New Guinea to remember the achievement in facing superior Japanese forces during World War II. Indeed, so many people have made these two pilgrimages that we are destroying the very places we hold sacred. At Gallipoli, the Turkish Government has had to widen access roads to cope with the crowds of tourists, cutting right through burial sites. At Kokoda, the famous track is being progressively destroyed by the sheer volume of people walking on it.

But there are voices of disagreement. Some ask why we remember the disastrous conditions of Gallipoli in World War I, when very few Australians are aware of the extraordinary achievement of the successful Charge of the Light Horse at Beersheba in the Middle East, or the crucial Australian achievement at Villers-Bretonneux in France during World War I. To test this theory, try asking a number of people what the name 'Beersheba' means to them, and you will quickly realise what the problem is ...

Similarly, why are we so focused on the Battle of Kokoda during World War II, when we remain largely unaware of the true story of the bombing of Darwin?

In general, any respectful commemoration of the experiences of Australians in battle is to be welcomed, and Australians are justifiably grateful for the effort of the Department of Veterans' Affairs in publishing high quality books on Australia's war experiences. Institutions such as the Australian War Memorial in Canberra and its equivalents in the states are also much visited.

Our course of study focuses on another, much neglected, aspect of war: the home front. It is usually dealt with casually, briefly and simply. Reference is commonly made to women knitting socks and sending comfort packages to Australian troops on the war front. They certainly did this, although few people have any idea of the sheer scale of their effort, which took thousands of hours.

But more recently, historians have turned to the important idea of 'the war that changed us'. This means that the experience of war actually caused change in the way Australians thought and felt and viewed the world. When the guns fell silent, society in Australia had changed, and people lived differently. The old, traditional values had been modified, and Australia became a more modern and more varied society. And yet, not everything changed for the better: some groups, such as women and First Peoples, made a significant contribution to both wars, but in the longer term did not gain the rights and opportunities they hoped for. This section is a study of two wars that truly did change Australia ... for some.

# Timeline

World events	Date	Australian events
<b>1903</b>		
<b>11 June 1903:</b> Serbian King Alexander Obrenovic is assassinated by the Black Hand nationalist movement		<b>22 October 1903:</b> First Australian Defence Act
<b>1909</b>		
<b>31 March 1909:</b> Serbia accepts Austrian control over Bosnia and Herzegovina		<b>13 December 1909:</b> Second Australian Defence Act
<b>1914</b>		
<b>28 June 1914:</b> Archduke Franz Ferdinand is assassinated, triggering tensions between European powers		<b>5 August 1914:</b> Australia's declaration of support for Britain in the war
<b>2–7 August 1914:</b> Germany invades Luxembourg and Belgium		<b>5 August 1914:</b> A cannon at Point Nepean (Victoria) fires the first shot of World War I in Australia
<b>10 August 1914:</b> Austria-Hungary invades Russia		<b>15 August 1914:</b> Founding of the Australian Imperial Force
<b>30 October 1914:</b> Allied campaign at Ypres, in Belgium, begins		<b>29 October 1914:</b> <i>War Precautions Act</i> 1914 Unemployment in Australia increases from 5.9 per cent to 11 per cent
<b>1915</b>		
<b>30 January 1915:</b> Germany makes its first use of gas in warfare		Feminist-pacifist Eleanor Moore is one of the founding members of the Sisterhood of International Peace in Melbourne and Vida Goldstein founds the Women's Peace Army, also in Melbourne
		<b>25th April 1915:</b> Gallipoli landing: a key event in the formation of a national identity

World events	Date	Australian events
<b>1915</b>		
<b>18 February 1915:</b> Germany launches its U-boat campaign in British waters		<b>6 September 1915:</b> The Aborigines Amending Protection Act, 1915
<b>1916</b>		
<b>21 February 1916:</b> The start of the Battle of Verdun		<b>1916:</b> Some 2000 Australian workers join the radical party, Industrial Workers of the World
<b>1 July 1916:</b> The Battle of the Somme begins		
<b>15 October 1916:</b> Germany resumes submarine warfare against Allied shipping		<b>28 October 1916:</b> The first referendum on conscription fails
<b>6 April 1917:</b> The United States of America declares war on Germany		
<b>1917</b>		
<b>29 August 1917:</b> Canada passes the War Service Act, giving the government the right to conscript people into the armed forces		<b>August–September 1917:</b> Some 100 000 workers join the Great Strike, mainly in New South Wales but also in Victoria
<b>31 October 1917:</b> The Battle of Beersheba captures a key city in southern Palestine from Turkish/German forces		<b>October 1917:</b> Existing restrictions on Indigenous Australians serving in the armed forces were relaxed, allowing 'half-castes' to serve
<b>7 November 1917:</b> Revolution in Russia brings Lenin and the Communists to power		<b>8 November 1917:</b> South Australia's Nomenclature Act permits the changing on place names that sound German
<b>7 December 1917:</b> The United States declares war on Austria-Hungary		
<b>1917</b>		
<b>22 December 1917:</b> Russia begins negotiations with Germany in the Treaty of Brest-Litovsk		<b>20 December 1917:</b> The second referendum on conscription fails

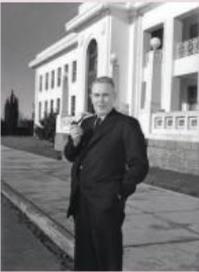
World events	Date	Australian events
<b>1917</b>		
<b>11 November 1918:</b> The Armistice brings an end to fighting		<b>1919:</b> Paris Peace Conference: Hughes represents Australia rather than Britain and refuses to support Japan's demands for a racial equality clause in the League of Nations Covenant
<b>1937</b>		
<b>1937:</b> Tensions in Europe, and the aggressive policies of Hitler, create fears of war		<b>1937:</b> Expecting international war, Australia begins the process of building up its armed forces
<b>1939</b>		
<b>3 September 1939:</b> Britain declares war on Germany after Nazi Germany's invasion of Poland		<b>3 September 1939:</b> Prime Minister Menzies announces to the nation that Australia has declared war on Germany
<b>3 September 1939:</b> Prime Minister Neville Chamberlain appoints Winston Churchill as First Lord of the Admiralty		<b>9 September 1939:</b> The National Security Act is passed <b>October 1939:</b> Announcement of a 2nd AIF
<b>1940</b>		
<b>May–June 1940:</b> Fall of France - this led to a surge of enlistments for the 2nd AIF		<b>January 1940:</b> The first Australian troops depart for service with the British in the Middle East
<b>June 1940:</b> Italy joins the war - This led to the interment/ poor treatment of Australian/Italians		
<b>July–October 1940:</b> Britain holds off Hitler's invasion by its defence in the Battle of Britain		
<b>1940</b>		
<b>27 September 1940:</b> Germany and Italy sign the Tripartite Pact with Japan		<b>July 1940:</b> Formation of the Volunteer Defence Corps

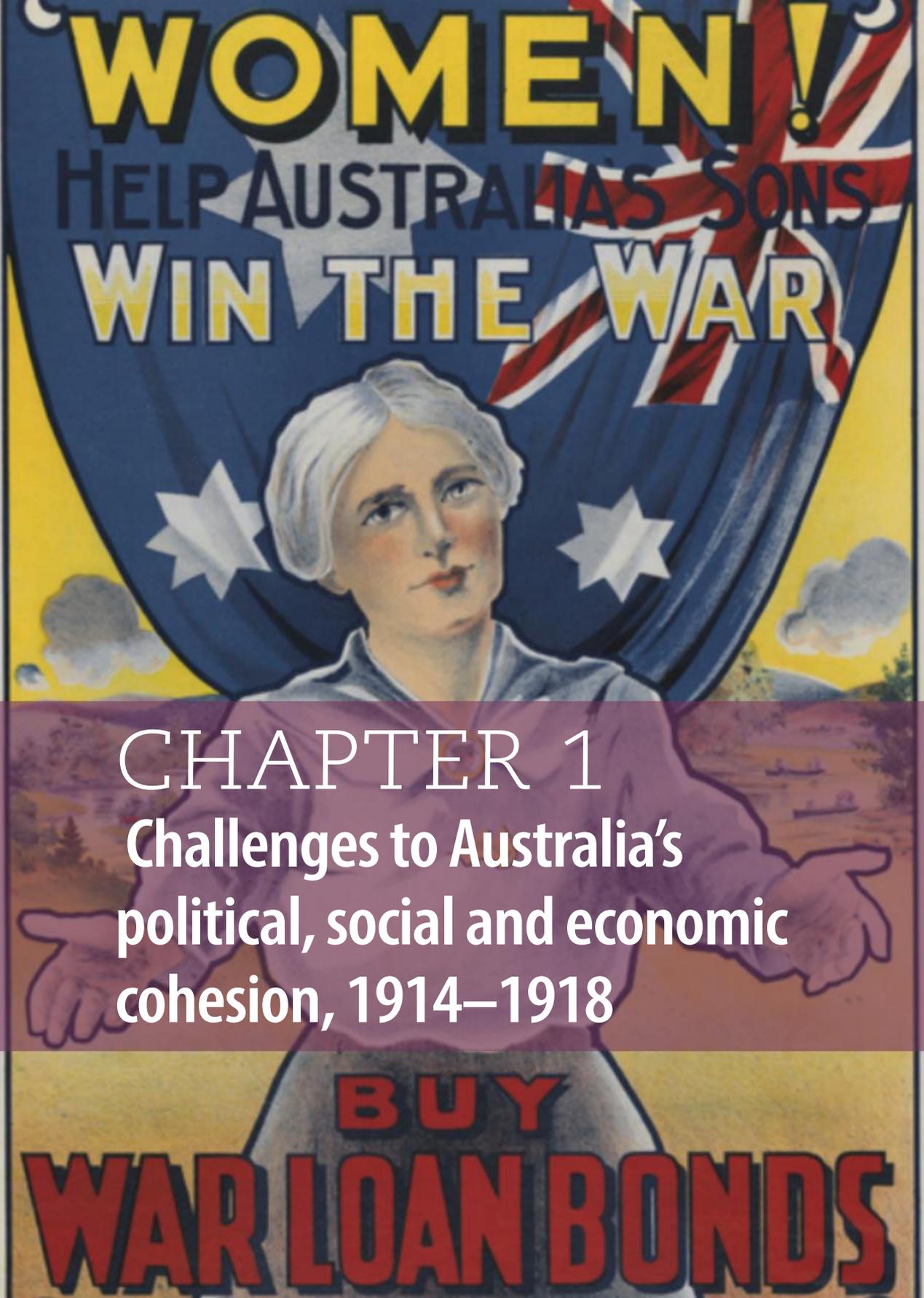
World events	Date	Australian events
<b>1941</b>		
<b>22 June 1941:</b> The Nazi invasion of Soviet Russia opens up a new front in the war		<b>July 1940:</b> Petrol rationing
<b>1941</b>		
<b>7 December 1941:</b> Japanese attack on US naval base at Pearl Harbor		<b>7 October 1941:</b> Labor politician John Curtin becomes Prime Minister  <b>15 December 1941:</b> Prime Minister Curtin announces that women may work in war industries
<b>1942</b>		
<b>14 January 1942:</b> German submarines attack Allied shipping off the coast of the United States		<b>January 1942:</b> The Australian Government creates the Manpower Directorate, with extensive powers of 'industrial conscription'
<b>7–15 February 1942:</b> The Battle of Singapore, ending in its capture by the Japanese		<b>19 February 1942:</b> Bombing of Darwin and other cities by Japanese planes
United States establishes the South-West Pacific Area, and uses Australia as a base for its troops		<b>March 1942:</b> Constance Duncan unsuccessfully proposes the creation of a national childcare scheme to allow women to enter the workforce
<b>11 March 1942:</b> General Douglas MacArthur makes a secret escape from the Philippines		<b>18 April 1942:</b> Australia's armed forces are placed under the command of US General Douglas MacArthur
<b>4–7 June 1942:</b> The Battle of Midway halts Japan's advance into the Pacific region		<b>31 May–8 June 1942:</b> Japanese mini-submarines attack Sydney
<b>13 June 1942:</b> The United States establishes its Office of War Information for propaganda purposes		<b>June 1942:</b> The Manpower Directorate begins to recruit married women only for work in war industries
<b>7 August 1942:</b> US forces land at Guadalcanal		<b>August 1942:</b> The Manpower Directorate moves to full recruitment of women for work in war industries

World events	Date	Australian events
<b>1942</b>		
<b>23 August 1942:</b> Russia's fierce resistance to Nazi Germany's invading forces lasts to 2 February 1943, and results in a devastating defeat for Hitler's army, halting its advance into Eastern Europe and Russia		
<b>1943</b>		
<b>5 February 1943:</b> General Dwight Eisenhower is put in command of Allied forces in North Africa		<b>February 1943:</b> Creation of Australia's first female cartoon hero, Wanda the War Girl
<b>10 July 1943:</b> Allied forces land at German occupied Sicily, and begin the invasion of Hitler's 'Fortress Europe'		<b>1942–43:</b> Australia suffers a total of 97 Japanese raids
<b>1945</b>		
<b>7–9 May 1945:</b> Germany surrenders to the Allies		<b>13 July 1945:</b> Following John Curtin's death Ben Chifley is elected leader of the Australian Labor Party, and becomes Prime Minister of Australia
<b>6 and 9 August 1945:</b> Atomic bombs are dropped on Hiroshima and Nagasaki, leading to Japan's surrender		

AN AUSTRALIAN SOLDIER  
OF THE GREAT WAR

## Notable Australian Prime Ministers referenced in this Area of Study

Period	Prime Minister	
1915–23	William (Billy) Hughes (Hughes began as a member of the ALP, and after the split in the party he formed his own party referred to as the National Labor Party.)	
1939–41	Robert Menzies (LIB. During much of the war, Menzies was Prime Minister of the United Australia Party; he founded the Liberal Party in 1944.)	
1941–45	John Curtin (ALP)	
1945–49	Ben Chifley (ALP)	



# CHAPTER 1

## Challenges to Australia's political, social and economic cohesion, 1914–1918

**Source 1.0** This poster was produced in 1918, towards the end of World War I. The theme was that civilians on the

home front could do a great deal to support Australian troops abroad.

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Cambridge University Press

## Chapter timeline

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	<b>1914</b>	Unemployment in Australia increases from 5.9 per cent to 11 per cent
<b>30 January 1915:</b> Germany makes its first use of gas in warfare	<b>1915</b>	Feminist-pacifist Eleanor Moore is one of the founding members of the Sisterhood of International Peace in Melbourne and Vida Goldstein founds the Women's Peace Army, also in Melbourne
	<b>1915</b>	<b>25th April 1915:</b> Gallipoli landing: a key event in the formation of a national identity
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<b>11 November 1918:</b> The Armistice brings an end to fighting		<b>1919:</b> Paris Peace Conference: Hughes represents Australia rather than Britain and refuses to support Japan's demands for a racial equality clause in the League of Nations Covenant

## 1.1 Introduction: From the Defence Acts to the outbreak of World War I, 1903–1914

### INQUIRY QUESTION

Why was World War I the most divisive war in Australia's history?

Regarding the impact of World War I on Australia, historian Stuart Macintyre has written:

#### Source 1.1

[In World War I] the material and human resources of the most powerful industrial economies were mobilized to bear upon a long [strip] of land just a few miles wide [the Western Front], twisting from Belgium down to Switzerland. Once Australia was drawn into the grip of this serpent, its demands would press the country to breaking point.

Stuart Macintyre, *The Oxford History of Australia, Volume 4, 1901–1942, The Succeeding Age*, Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 1986, p. 158.

When we consider the home front in modern war, we might see it simply in terms of men and women producing clothing, food and ammunition for the troops at the front. The so-called ‘home front’ seems peaceful compared with the bloody and hopeless fighting at Gallipoli and the horrors of trench warfare on the Western Front.

Recent historians have corrected this misunderstanding. While the battlefields in the north of France were terrible, the home front in Australia became a different battlefield, as the heavy demands of war and the issue of conscription set Australian against Australian. World War I was, as Clare Wright and Don Featherstone have argued in their documentary, *The War That Changed Us*, one that ‘drove a wedge right through Australian society’ in a way not seen again until the Vietnam War later in the century. In this superbly produced documentary, they examine how the Australian people experienced strains they had never encountered before. For historian Stuart Macintyre, Australia was (from early 1917 until 1918) ‘a nation divided’, in which ‘the government of Australia was conducted in a state of almost perpetual crisis’.

### Australia’s defence policy after Federation

The Australian *Constitution* (1901) transferred the responsibility for defence from the former colonies to the newly-formed federal government. Section 51 empowered the Federal Parliament to pass laws relating to ‘the naval and military defence of the Commonwealth and of the several States’.<sup>1</sup> The old colonies, now states, transferred their existing ships and weapons to the Federal Ministry of Defence. The Commander-in-Chief of the armed forces was the Governor-General of Australia.

The new Commonwealth quickly organised its defence. The first *Defence Act, 1903* (Cth) empowered the federal government to conscript men into the armed forces, only for service on Australian soil; they could not serve abroad. The second *Defence Act, 1909* (Cth) provided for all adult males up to the age of 60 to do military service in Australia and its territories. This Act was implemented in 1911. From the beginning, limited conscription was enshrined in Australian federal laws.

Another strong influence on Australian defence was Britain’s defence policies. Britain had requested financial contributions to help it build up the Royal Navy. It also stated that it could not support the cost of keeping a fleet in the Pacific region, and so each country must establish its own navy. Between 1909 and 1914, the Royal Australian Navy was founded and established. Our initial fleet consisted of a battle cruiser, three light cruisers and one destroyer, all built in Britain and mostly manned by British sailors. Significantly, Australia refused Britain’s request to contribute one battleship to the British fleet in preparation for war with Germany’s Navy.<sup>2</sup>

In a sign of things to come, Prime Minister Alfred Deakin invited an American fleet of 16 battleships, the ‘Great White Fleet’ – touring the world in 1908 – to make a visit to Sydney Harbour. Australians saw this as protection against the ‘Asian invasion’ they so feared.

### The outbreak of World War I

At the outbreak of war on 5 August 1914, Australia automatically supported Britain. The Governor-General simply informed our Prime Minister that Australia had also declared war on Germany. The Federal Parliament did not have to debate the matter. Well before the declaration of war, both the Prime Minister and the Opposition leader had made strong statements of support for Britain. On 31 July 1914, the Opposition Leader, Andrew Fisher, famously committed Australia to supporting Britain ‘to the last man and the last shilling’.

According to historian David Day:

### Source 1.2

**antipodes** generally, this term means the direct opposite of something. Applied to Australia and New Zealand, it indicates that they are at the far end of the world from Britain.

**mother country** the country from which most non-Indigenous Australian people of this period originally came from

As an integral part of the British Empire, there [was] no question of Australia standing aside. It was convinced that its fate rested on Britain's. Even had it been possible to know the awful cost that Australia would pay for its dependence, it would be unlikely to have deterred them. Australian identity was so intermingled with that of a grander British imperial identity, that sentiment alone would have impelled Australians into battle. Set at the **antipodes** of the 'mother country', Australians took confidence from their membership of an invented British race, which they believed to be self-evidently superior, and of an empire they proclaimed to be the most powerful in the world. The survival of 'white Australia' demanded that it be so. Australia was tied to empire by more than sentiment. Its export-oriented economy was dependent on British purchases of its primary products and on the City of London for its capital [meaning its finances, trade and investment].

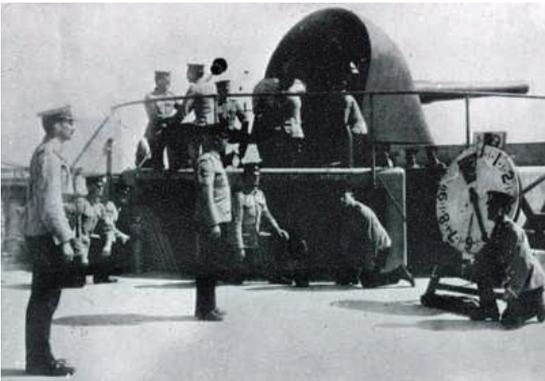
David Day, *Claiming a Continent: A New History of Australia*, Sydney: Harper Collins, 2005, p. 200.

### FOCUS QUESTION 1.1

According to David Day (see Source 1.2), why exactly did the Australian people in 1914 support Britain without hesitation?

### DID YOU KNOW?

When Australia declared war, a German ship (the SS *Pfalz*) was seen leaving Port Melbourne for Germany. A shot was fired across its bows from Fort Nepean at the entrance to Port Phillip Bay. Together with the actions of the pilot, Captain Montgomery, who wrestled with the captain, the ship returned to port and its crew imprisoned for the rest of the war. At Portsea on 5 August 2014, the centenary of this first shot fired by the British Empire in World War I was celebrated.



↑ **Source 1.3** This photograph shows the cannon located at Point Nepean. When it fired on the fleeing German ship the SS *Pfalz*, it fired the first shot of World War I.

**Australian Imperial Force (AIF)** founded on 15 August 1914, initially made up of one infantry unit and one light horse unit

Joining the war meant mobilising defence forces. The government initially desired 20 000 men, the maximum amount it could equip, clothe and arm. In addition, this was the smallest size of military unit that would qualify to be independently commanded by Australian officers; anything smaller would simply have been absorbed into the British Army. In Melbourne's Victoria Barracks in St Kilda Road, men pushed, shoved and fought to get to the head of the queue. After the Gallipoli Landing in April 1915 volunteers increased from 3000 in April to 36 000 in July.<sup>3</sup> About 100 000 men joined rifle clubs, to improve their military and sharp-shooting skills, many later joining the **Australian Imperial Force (AIF)**.

Many people wondered how these men would perform in battle and great joy arose when the Australian battleship HMAS *Sydney* sank the German cruiser *Emden* off the coast of Western Australia. The popular patriotic song ‘Australia Will Be There’ celebrated this victory.<sup>4</sup>

### DID YOU KNOW?

A Queensland grazier rode 460 miles on horseback to volunteer for the Light Horse. Finding recruiting full, he took a ship to Hobart and then to Sydney before being accepted – a total trip of 2000 miles to volunteer.<sup>5</sup>



↑ **Source 1.4** Some of the members of the 3rd Field Company AIF marching through a street in Hobart, 5 October 1914

### RESEARCH TASK 1.1

Go to the Parliament of Australia website to source the article by Jonathan Curtis, titled: ‘To the last man’—Australia’s entry to war in 1914. Discuss why Australia had no choice to go to war with respect to the Constitution.

From the outset, the war evoked a broad range of responses from the Australian public, from patriotic support to vocal opposition, as well as the understandable responses of anxiety for loved ones at the front and fear of defeat. Despite the enthusiastic embrace of war, some criticism of Australia’s involvement in the war emerged, including from a minority in the labour movement. Frank Anstey, member of the House of Representatives, expressed traditional **socialist** opposition to **militarism** and war and was called a traitor by his opponents. As the months of war unfolded tensions grew, making this war and this time, the most divisive in Australia’s history.

The war effort placed strains on manpower and the resources needed for industrial production. Food, clothing and other goods became scarce and restrictions were placed on individual freedoms under censorship and the *War Precautions Act*, 1914 (Cth).

**socialism** a political and economic theory that opposes private ownership of resources and property, and demands that the community as a whole should own and share the means of production  
**militarism** a belief that a country should have strong military forces, and must be willing to use them aggressively to defend its national interests. Military values are the dominant forces shaping the political and social life of a nation in times of war.

### DID YOU KNOW?

Australia’s population in mid-1914 was just over 4.9 million, of which 52% were men. Each man of ‘military age’ (19 to 38 years old) had to decide whether to join the armed forces and go to war. Recruiting offices opened at army barracks around Australia on 10 August 1914, only 6 days after the war began. Thousands of Australian men joined the AIF in the first few months, eager to support the British Empire.

## 1.2 Censorship and social control

### INQUIRY QUESTION

Why and how did the Australian Government control the publication of information during the war?

**censorship** any act by which a government acts to check published information, to remove some parts of it, or to block publication altogether

**Censorship** is used to control the flow of information as part of modern warfare. It is aimed at keeping critical information from the enemy and dampening public opposition to war.

Historian John Lack wrote:

#### Source 1.5

Censorship [...] was imposed at three levels: in the field by the Allied armies, by quarantining correspondents from the action, and by correspondents, anxious for lively copy, imaginatively dressing up the scant information they received. As a result, Australian press coverage of the Great War, even by Australian official war correspondents, was from the outset characterized by optimism, anticipations of glorious success, and silence about the horrors and huge casualties. Reports of failure were delayed, uninformative, bereft of truth and realism, and flavoured with upbeat and victorious terminology. When casualties were mentioned at all, Allied losses were rarely reported and enemy losses inflated.

John Lack, 'The Great Madness of 1914–1918': Families at war in Melbourne's eastern and western fronts, *The LaTrobe Journal: Victoria and the Great War*, no. 96, September, 2015, pp. 67–8.

### FOCUS QUESTIONS 1.2

1. What were some of the main ways the government controlled the flow of information about the war to the public?
2. What is the justification for withholding information from the public?
3. What are some of the possible dangers or disadvantages of withholding information?

### The War Precautions Act 1914

The *War Precautions Act* 1914 was passed in October 1914, just two months after the war's commencement. It was not backed by a civil court, but by a military one, with the power to court-martial suspects. Its purpose was to prevent communication with the enemy and to stop any activity that could assist the enemy or harm the operations of His Majesty's forces in Australia or abroad. It also aimed to ensure the safety of all means of communications and prevent the spread of harmful information. Its reach could be enlarged by any provision 'which appears necessary or expedient with a view to the public safety and the defence of the Commonwealth'. It also gave the government the power to control the movement and activities of 'aliens', and to regulate any transfers of goods or money out of Australia to enemy countries. Some of the sweeping powers and harsh penalties included:

**alien** a non-British subject, which included all Australians of foreign background by birth or those granted naturalisation

- appointing officers to carry the order into effect, and for conferring on such officers and on the Minister such powers as are necessary or expedient for the purposes of the order;
- conferring on such persons as are specified in the order such powers with respect to arrest, detention, search of premises and persons, inspecting impounding or retention of books documents and papers, and otherwise, as are specified in the order, and for any other matters necessary or expedient for giving effect to the order.
- Any person who contravenes, or fails to comply with, any provision of any regulation or order made in pursuance of this Act shall be guilty of an offence against this Act. Penalty: One hundred pounds or six months' imprisonment, or both.

Source 1.6

Extract from the *War Precautions Act 1914*, Australian Government Federal Register of Legislation website.<sup>5</sup>

## 1.3 The debate over conscription

### INQUIRY QUESTION

To what extent did the debate on conscription for overseas service divide Australian society?

In late 1915, Prime Minister Billy Hughes learned from the national **census** of that year that Australia had a total of 244 000 unmarried men who could qualify to enlist. The purpose of the census was to ascertain the number of men eligible for service, as well as to quantify other resources in the community. Australia was sending 9500 troops every month to the front, to back up the 60 000 troops already on active service. Hughes now made the bold offer of a new intake of 50 000 men, an offer that Britain quickly accepted. The poster in Source 1.7 appeals to both Australian national pride – as represented by the addition of the iconic kangaroo – as well as loyalty to Britain, by keeping a promise to the mother country.

**census** an official population count



↑ Source 1.7 *Australia has promised Britain 50 000 more men. Will you help us keep that promise?*, artist unknown, c. 1915

### RESEARCH TASK 1.2

Go to the Old treasury building website to source: REMEMBERING CONSCRIPTION IN WORLD WAR I – WHAT DOES IT HAVE TO TELL US? for a comprehensive list of groups who were for/against conscription. Create a table of groups that were for and against conscription. Choose one and write a summary of their position.

Hughes faced a problem as Australia's laws allowed conscription of men into the armed forces only for service within Australia; they could not fight overseas.

**conscription** the process by which a government can legally require people to join its armed forces

**referendum** a direct vote by the electorate on a particular proposal or issue

**manifesto** a published statement of an individual's or a group's beliefs, aims and program of action

Hughes believed by mid-1916 that Australia needed **conscription** to raise an adequate armed force. Australia already had conscription in the form of compulsory military training for all young men. In January 1916, Hughes toured Britain to champion military service, supporting Britain's subsequent decision to introduce conscription. He returned to Australia in July 1916, determined that Australia do the same. The *War Precautions Act 1914* now allowed the Prime Minister to introduce conscription for overseas service. However, Labor's own anti-conscription policy and the strong resistance of the Victorian Trade Unions movement made it problematic. The situation was made more problematic because the Australian Imperial Force was at that time suffering enormous casualties in the Battle of the Somme, most notably in the savage fighting at locations such as Pozières. Aware that any parliamentary vote on conscription would divide his own Labor Party,

Hughes sidetracked the issue by appealing to the Australian nation in a plebiscite (commonly referred to as a '**referendum**'). Many opposed such a strategy.

The trade union movement's newspaper *Labor Call* declared: 'The war trenches are yawning for your lives – a gulf in which the hopes, the happiness, the blood and tears of your class would be swallowed. Refuse.'<sup>6</sup> Source 1.8 is an extract from the **manifesto** issued by The National Executive at the Australian Trade Union Congress (which took place in Melbourne from 10 to 11 May 1916).

#### Source 1.8

Fellow Unionists, – Conscription is the law of Great Britain and in the republic of the French. In both countries conscription has been used to render null and void all the achievements of Trade unionism – to destroy customs, rights and practices – to dilute and whittle away – to put unskilled in the place of skilled, women in the place of men, children in the place of adults. In both countries conscription has been used not merely as an instrument of national defence, but as a bludgeon [weapon] to break down the standard of the industrial classes. In both countries conscription commences not in the seizure of the body for slaughter, but originates in the proclamation itself. From that moment every subject within the prescribed ages is a potential subject of the sword. From that moment every industrial is a slave, every act of protest a crime, and every workingman who rises in indignation against the destruction of some hard-won right or privilege of his occupation is seized, interned, deported or conscribed. In both countries the industrial magnates [powerful leaders] have been permitted to wax fat on the blood of slaughter.

Cited in J. M. Main, *Conscription: The Australian Debate, 1901–1970*, Sydney: Cassell Australia, 1979, p. 37.

## USING HISTORICAL SOURCES AS EVIDENCE 1.1

1. Why did the trade union movement reject conscription for overseas service?
2. Who is the 'enemy' of working people identified in Source 1.8?

3. What do the trade unionists fear they will lose if conscription is introduced?
4. What punishments are given to people who criticise conscription? Is this description factually accurate?

## Two Australias?

Australia split over conscription. Even school playgrounds became battlegrounds for two opposing groups called the Conscriptionists or the Anti-Conscriptionists, who hurled abuse and more at each other. The same divisions would emerge later when Prime Minister Billy Hughes spoke on the second conscription referendum in 1917 at the Melbourne Cricket Ground (MCG). Some 100 000 people attended, grouped around multiple stages. When he spoke in front of the Members' Stand – and to the wealthier classes – he received a sympathetic hearing. Then he went to the Richmond side of the MCG, where the less wealthy sat. The moment he stepped on stage, a bombardment of abuse, rotten eggs, bottles and stones pelted him before he could speak. The MCG contained 'two Australias', divided over conscription. Source 1.9 shows the changing views on conscription held by Billy Hughes.

Billy Hughes in July 1915:

'In no circumstances would I agree to send men out of this country to fight against their will.'

Billy Hughes in November 1917:

'There are men in Australia, and they must fight.'

Source 1.9

Two perspectives on conscription by Billy Hughes from 1915 and 1917.

Sources 1.10–1.12 show the perspective of religious groups on conscription.

An Anglican view:

'As gold is tried by fire, so nations are purified by suffering [...] The Church of England stands, as always, for duty to God and Country.'

Source 1.10

Cited in 'The Victorian Bishops' Pastoral letter', *The Argus*, 5 December 1917.

A Methodist view:

'[This is] a war for the ethics of Christianity against the ethics of paganism [...] the need for wider recognition of the ennobling power of sacrifice [...]

Source 1.11

Cited in *The Spectator*, 23 November 1917.

A Catholic view:

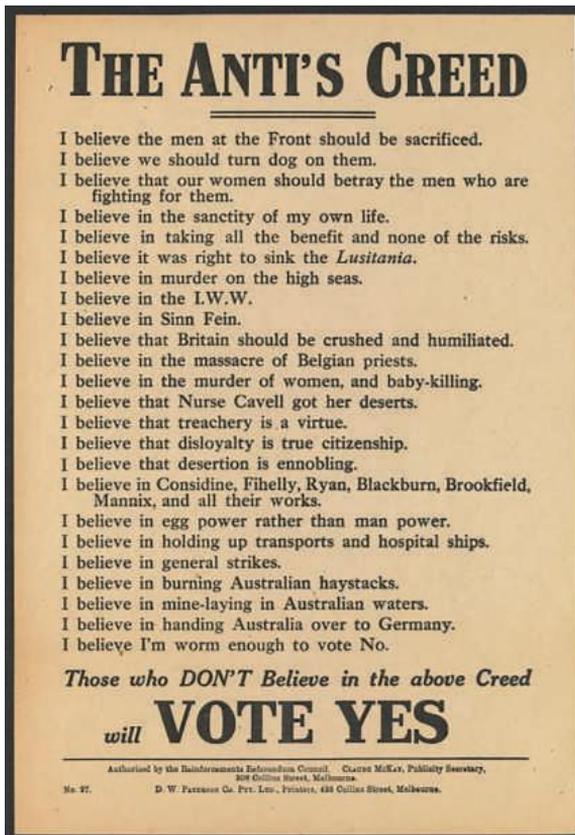
'Mr. Brennan said that, although he was a Roman Catholic, neither he nor thousands of his co-religionists agreed with the [anti-conscription] view expressed by Dr. Mannix [the Roman Catholic Archbishop of Melbourne]. The church as a whole was loyal to Empire and the British throne. They submitted to the Archbishop in spiritual matters, but were free to act as they liked in political matters.'

Source 1.12

Cited in *The Argus*, 30 November 1917.



← **Source 1.13** A pro-conscription poster. *The Crime of those who vote "NO!"*, Melbourne Punch, 1916.



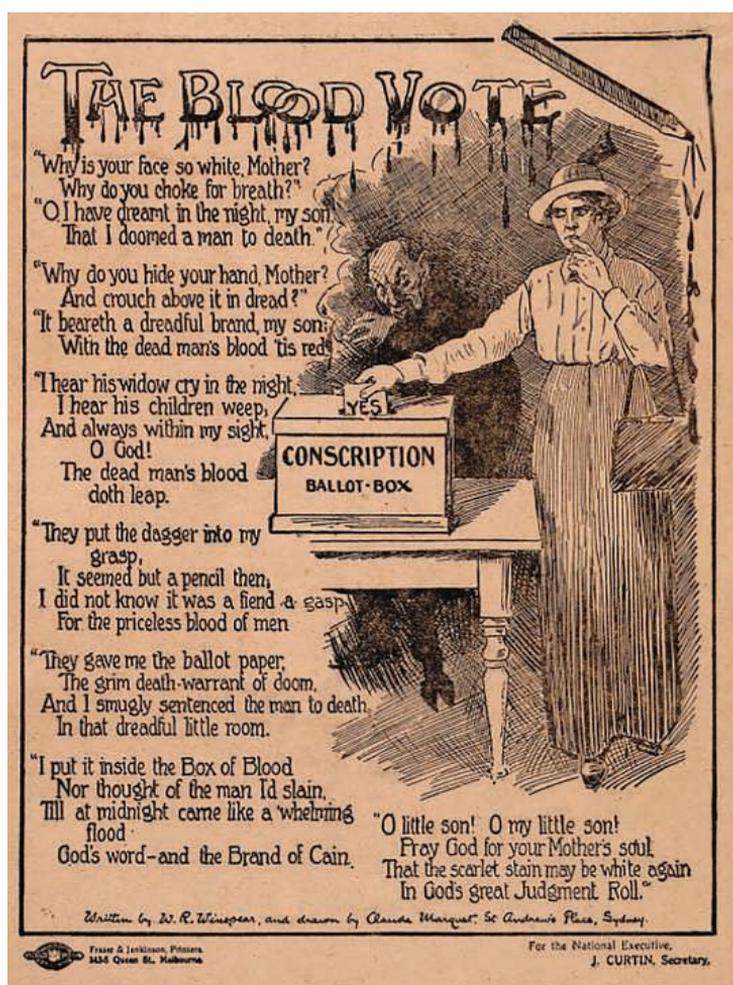
← **Source 1.14** An anti-conscription poster. *The Anti's Creed*, Reinforcements Referendum Council, 1917.

Source 1.15 is what a curator of an exhibition at the Old Treasury Building had to say about the debate.

The conscription debate generated an enormous volume of propaganda material. Although the Australian Government promoting the ‘Yes’ case had more resources at its disposal, the ‘No’ side created some extremely effective cartoons and leaflets, some of which were extraordinarily influential. One of the most effective leaflets created was the anti-conscription illustrated poem ‘The Blood Vote’, one million copies of which were printed and distributed between 1916 and 1917. ‘The Blood Vote’ was drawn by the remarkable Labor Party artist, Claude Marquet, while the poem is now thought to have been written by E.J. Dempsey.

Source 1.15

‘Propaganda and the Conscription Debate’, Old Treasury Building website, author unknown, accessed August 2021.<sup>7</sup>



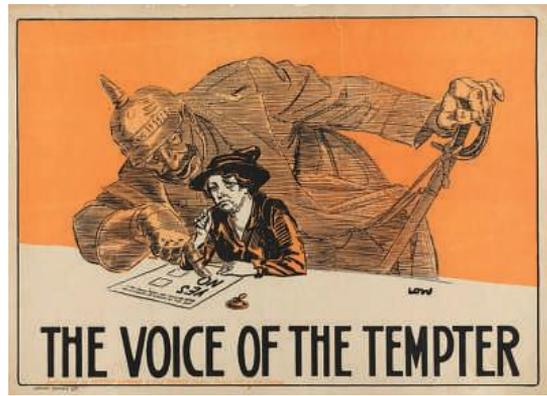
**RESEARCH TASK 1.3**

Go to the Old treasury building website to source: PROPAGANDA AND THE CONSCRIPTION DEBATE and locate the 'Hatched From a Bad Egg' poster. It might also be useful for you to look into Hughes's clashes with Queensland Premier Thomas Ryan, who was anti-conscription.

← **Source 1.16** This image is accompanied by a poem. A child innocently asks her mother why she is upset. The mother, haunted by guilt, admits that by voting 'yes' in the conscription referendum she condemned a man to death. *The blood vote*, W. R. Winspear and Claude Marquet, published in *The Australian Worker*, 12 October 1916.



↑ **Source 1.17** This image features a child's innocent voice urging the mother not to support conscription. Vote 'no' mum, Australian Labor Party, 1916.



↑ **Source 1.18** *The voice of the tempter*, 1916

## USING HISTORICAL SOURCES AS EVIDENCE 1.2

1. Examine Source 1.16. What does the poem tell us about the reason for the woman's hesitation to vote 'Yes' to conscription?
2. Who might the male figure in the background of Source 1.16 represent?
3. In Source 1.17, how does the inclusion of a child add to the emotional message of the anti-conscription movement?
4. Which political party made the poster in Source 1.17?
5. In Source 1.18, who or what does the figure in uniform represent?
6. Judging from Source 1.18, what was the main argument used by those who supported the 'Yes' vote and criticised people who voted 'No'?

## Attack on the Industrial Workers of the World

**Wobblies** a nickname for the International Trade Union (which itself was formally known as the Industrial Workers of the World)

**voluntary enlistment** the process by which individuals decide, by their own free choice, to join one of the armed forces and to fight for their country

Prime Minister Hughes was empowered by the *War Precautions Act 1914* to crush public opposition to the war. He used police to close public meetings and raid dissident groups' headquarters. His main target was the international workers' movement, the Industrial Workers of the World, commonly known as the **Wobblies**. They rejected the traditional methods of trade union campaigning, and preferred direct, militant action. One of their leaders, Tom Barker, was sentenced to six months detention and actually was imprisoned for eight. The government tried to deport him to his native Britain, but was refused, so it deported him and other activists to Chile on charges of treason and arson.

## The first referendum, October 1916

In August 1916, Britain's War Council informed Hughes that the four Australian divisions needed 82 000 reinforcements over four months or face dismantling. Since **voluntary enlistment** was declining, the only solution was conscription. The resultant referendum asked: 'Are you in favour of the government having, in this grave emergency, the same compulsory powers over citizens in

regard to requiring their military service within the Commonwealth?’ Hughes formed the National Referendum Council to support the campaign, and made several rousing speeches.

I believe that by far the greater number of the citizens of the Commonwealth now realise the tremendous crisis at which we stand. They perceive that we are at a turning point of our history – in the history of the world. They are resolute to face the situation. They accept the responsibilities of free citizenship in regard to the stern realities of war, and are resolved to do their duty. [...] Voluntary recruiting has brought in only some 18,000 in the last three months. It is obvious that these are quite insufficient to maintain our Australian army at its proper strength. [...] There must be behind the man at the front the full forces of the nation. It is with the national will behind it that the army strikes. The burdens that press on the people will be grievously heavy, and they must be heavier before we win through. The **wheels of industry** will be kept going. We must carry on the war. [The audience applauds] We will have due regard to the circumstances of each man, every business, every industry, but we must carry on the war, or else there will be no business or industry. [applause].

Cited in J. M. Main, *Conscription: The Australian Debate, 1901–1970*, Sydney: Cassell Australia, 1979, p. 50.

Source 1.20 is the 1916 referendum question presented to Australian voters.

Are you in favour of the Government having, in this grave emergency, the same compulsory powers over citizens in regard to requiring their military service, for the term of this war, outside the Commonwealth, as it now has in regard to military service within the Commonwealth?

Referendum question put to Australian voters on 28 October 1916.

The referendum was defeated by a narrow margin: 1 087 557 votes in favour, 1 160 033 against. These figures only show *how many* people voted in the referendum on conscription; they cannot tell us *what sorts* of people voted for or against. This question has caused considerable debate among historians, but any attempt to answer it remains problematic, if not impossible. Historians have attempted to see differences between males and females, Catholics and Anglicans, working class and middle class, city people and country people, soldiers at the front and those in reserve. Ken Inglis (historian), however, usefully reminds us: ‘If some thirty-six thousand out of two-and-a-quarter million people had voted “Yes” instead of “No”, the AIF would have been reinforced by conscripts. The result was thus achieved so narrowly that any one of a number of things can be said to have been decisive; and historians can choose, according to taste and interest, the Easter Rising or the canniness of farmers or some other factor. It might even be argued without much perversity that the vote of soldiers was in a sense decisive.’<sup>8</sup>

Source 1.21 shows the results of the first referendum on conscription.

#### Source 1.19

### RESEARCH TASK 1.4

Research via your preferred browser the ‘To Arms’ poster and the *Unlawful Associations Act 1916*. This legislation permitted the Australian Government to ban any organisation that was seen as politically subversive. Discuss why this legislation was passed.

#### Source 1.20

**wheels of industry** a term referring to economic and industrial activity

↓ Source 1.21

Results of first referendum on conscription

State	Electoral roll	Ballots issued	For Vote	%	Against Vote	%	Informal
New South Wales	1 055 986	858 399	356 805	42.92	474 544	57.08	27 050
Victoria	824 972	696 684	353 930	51.88	328 216	48.12	14 538
Queensland	366 042	309 921	144 200	47.71	158 051	52.29	7 670
South Australia	262 781	211 252	87 924	42.44	119 236	57.56	4 092
Western Australia	167 602	140 648	94 069	69.71	40 884	30.29	5 695
Tasmania	107 875	88 231	48 493	56.17	37 833	43.83	1 905
Federal Territories	4 572	3 468	2 136	62.73	1 269	37.27	63
Total <sup>†</sup>	2 789 830	2 308 603	1 087 557	48.39	1 160 033	51.61	61 013
†Including 133 813 votes by members of the Australian Imperial Force, of which 72 399 were for, 58 894 against, and 2 520 informal.							
Results	Obtained majority in three States and an overall minority of 72 476 votes						

Plebiscite Results, 28 October 1916, (1) Military Service, Parliament of Australia website, accessed September 2021<sup>9</sup>

### The federal election, March 1917

As a consequence of the referendum result, Prime Minister Hughes and other important ministers quit the Labor Party, and formed a new group called Win the War Party or the Nationalist Party. Although some working people still supported the Labor Party, more now supported a massive effort to win the war, and Hughes’ Nationalists won the election. Although some working people still supported the Labor Party’s anti-war stance, others now supported a massive effort to win the war, if only because there was no viable alternative course of action. Hughes’ Nationalists won the election.

### The second referendum, December 1917

According to the records of the Australian War Memorial, Australia had suffered some 40 000 casualties (killed or wounded) in 1916, with 5 533 casualties in just one day at the Battle of Fromelles. By the end of 1917, a further 76 836 casualties had occurred, with 38 000 casualties at the recent Battle of Passchendaele alone.<sup>10</sup> Volunteer recruitment could never hope to replace such heavy losses.

**German sympathisers**  
people who were on the side of Germany during the war

Prime Minister Hughes launched a second referendum, claiming those who opposed a Yes vote were **German sympathisers** or, in the case of unionists, Bolsheviks (Communists). He condemned Irish Catholics as members of Sinn Fein, a radical political group in Ireland. In this second bitter struggle, the Catholic Archbishop Daniel Mannix was an equally powerful opponent. Hughes asked the Pope to instruct the Archbishop to reduce his

fiery attacks. Hughes even described female anti-conscriptionists as traitors.

The debates were even more poisonous than before. The anti-conscriptionists appealed to the racial attitudes created by the White Australia Policy. They alarmed people by suggesting that if more white Australians were sent to the front, then farms and businesses in Australia would be forced to

hire ‘cheap’ labour, by which they meant people such as Chinese or Pacific Island Kanakas. A left-wing socialist newspaper warned that conscription would result in Australian women having to marry Indian and Chinese men. Appealing to deeply held racial ideas it trumpeted: ‘You don’t win the war if you substitute ni\*\*ers for Australians.’ [Please note that the speaker here uses a deeply offensive slang term referring to people of colour and has been edited due to its offensiveness today].<sup>11</sup>

## Key individuals in the second referendum debate<sup>12</sup>

### Voices against conscription

#### Archbishop Daniel Mannix

Archbishop Daniel Mannix became the most powerful critic of conscription. He was not disloyal to Australia – a position he reconfirmed in 1962, saying: ‘I wanted to win the war. I wanted to promote voluntary enlistment, but I did not want conscription.’<sup>13</sup> Many Australian Catholics followed his advice to oppose conscription. After the Irish nationalist uprising (the Easter Uprising) in Dublin, Ireland, against British rule in Easter 1916, Mannix linked conscription with Britain’s brutal suppression of the uprising.

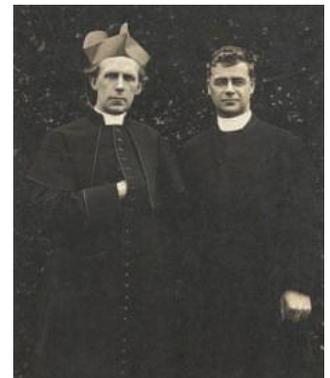
In a speech given at a Catholic Church fete in Clifton Hill, Melbourne, in September 1916, Mannix argued:

I think I can say that I have read most of the appeals that have been made for conscription in Australia. But in spite of all these eloquent and impassioned appeals, my common sense will not allow me to believe that the addition of 100 000, or even of 200 000 conscript Australians to the 15 000 000 of fighting men that the Allies have at their disposal could be a deciding factor, or even a substantial factor, in the issue of the war. However, the people must decide for themselves. The vast majority of the voters at the referendum will, of course, be persons who could not be called to the serve in a conscript army. But, still, I think that even they, or the majority of them, will prefer to rely on the voluntary system – and make it more efficient if they can – rather than to force the men of Australia, married or single, to face enemy guns in Europe by pointing Australian guns at them in the rear. [The crown applauds]

Source 1.22

Cited in J. M. Main, *Conscription: The Australian Debate, 1901–1970*, Sydney: Cassell Australia, 1979, p. 61.

Not all Catholics supported Mannix’s anti-conscription stance. The Catholic Archbishop of Perth, for example, campaigned in favour of conscription. However, the Easter Uprising in Dublin and its suppression hardened Catholic opposition.



→ **Source 1.23** Archbishop Daniel Mannix (left) with one of his priests. Mannix’s opposition to conscription inevitably drew accusations of disloyalty.



### Vida Goldstein

One of Australia's most prominent and vocal political activists Vida Goldstein (1869–1949) was an influential **pacifist** and **feminist**, whose energy and vision energised some radical organisations, including the Women's Peace Army. Goldstein issued the Manifesto extracted in Source 1.25 on behalf of the Australian Women's Peace Army.

← **Source 1.24** Vida Goldstein, Phil Waterhouse, 1944. This portrait captures much of her intellectual power, as well as the quiet humour with which she could manage people who tried to heckle her when she was speaking. She was the first woman in Australia to stand for election to Parliament. Despite standing four times, she was unsuccessful.

### Source 1.25

**pacifist** a person who is completely opposed to war for any reason, and who refuses on principle to fight

**feminist** a person who campaigns to increase the rights and freedoms of women in society, and to highlight the unequal power relationships that control their lives

**strike** a protest action taken by working people by stopping work, usually with the aim of gaining better pay or conditions

**docile** peaceful and obedient

**magnate** powerful industry leaders

**secret diplomacy** contacts, discussions or agreements made between governments without the public being told of them

Desire for commercial supremacy, or fear of losing it, has kept all the nations armed to the teeth. This weight of armaments, upon which our capitalistic system depends, and on whose maintenance the bulk of the national income must be expended, has kept the working classes (without whose labour no wealth could be created) in such an oppressive condition of wage slavery, that in every country they were building up their industrial and political organisations with the object of bringing about a complete change of the commercial system – so that production should be for use and not for profit. Sometimes, when conditions became more than usually oppressive, the double-edged weapon of the **strike** had to be resorted to.

Their teaching so aroused the fear of the Great Powers of Industry, whose enormous profits depend on a **docile** wage-earning working class, that in every country certain of these financial **magnates**, backed up by their newspaper and naval and military tools, have openly declared that the only way to bring the working men to their senses was to have a great war, which would destroy the growing power of Trade Unionism, which was directly opposed to the established power of Capitalism.

We do not say that this war was promoted with the deliberate object of crushing the workers, but we do say that the belief in Might, the fear of enemies without and within national boundaries, the use of the press, or armament firms, of **secret diplomacy**, of naval and military strength, to bolster up a social system under which the great mass of the people live in avoidable anxiety, wretchedness and ugliness, has made such a Clash of Interests that a Clash of Arms between Nations prepared for War, some more, some less, became inevitable when Circumstance and Opportunity sounded the tocsin of alarm.

Now that war has come, Britishers who believe that Might is the guardian angel of Right, are driven to jettison all their cherished ideas of freedom and conscience in the frantic effort to get enough men to do enough killing to wipe out the enemy.

Manifesto of the Australia's Women's Peace Army, First Published: in *The Woman Voter*, October 5, 1916, Marxists.org website, accessed August 2021.<sup>14</sup>

### USING HISTORICAL SOURCES AS EVIDENCE 1.3

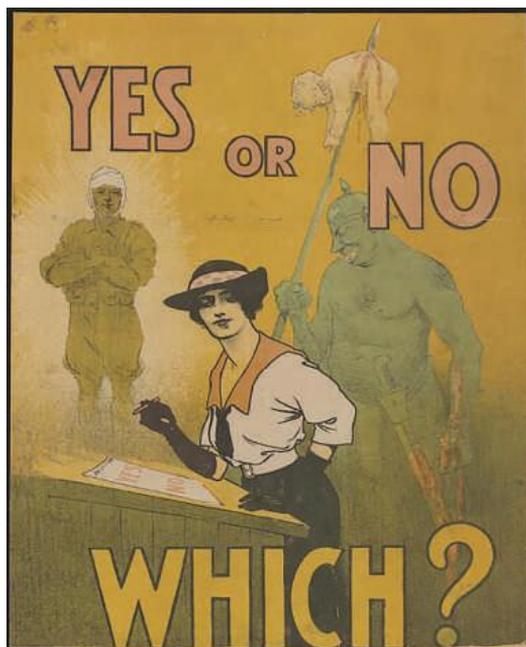
1. According to Vida Goldstein in Source 1.25, what was wrong with the 'commercial system'?
2. What did she think caused the war?
3. Why did she oppose conscription?



#### DID YOU KNOW?

In a referendum people are asked to vote directly on an issue. In Australia today the word referendum refers specifically to a vote to change the Australian Constitution. The 1916 and 1917 votes were technically plebiscites or opinion polls.

← **Source 1.26** Propaganda created enthusiasm for the war by depicting the enemy in the worst possible light. A pro-conscription poster. *Your Turn Next*, Norman Lindsay, published in *The Bulletin*, 8 November 1917.



← **Source 1.27** An anti-conscription poster. *Yes or No, Which?* Harry J. Weston, c. 1917. This poster shows an elegant and well-educated woman pausing thoughtfully as she prepares to vote on conscription. The choice is between helping a wounded Australian soldier, who is surrounded by light, or a bestialised German soldier with a baby impaled on a pike, a reference to real and rumoured atrocities against unarmed civilian populations – especially women and children – by German forces.

## USING HISTORICAL SOURCES AS EVIDENCE 1.4

1. Why might the artist of Source 1.27 have chosen to show the main figure as a well-dressed and presumably well-educated person?
2. Why does the detail of a wounded Australian soldier make such a powerful case for extending conscription to war zones?
3. How does the artist make the German soldier look evil and bestial?
4. Is the artist factually correct in showing a German soldier committing an atrocity by killing a baby?

The second referendum was again won by the 'No' vote by a slightly larger margin. Votes in favour of conscription fell by 72 000, votes against conscription rose by 21 000. Only Western Australia and Tasmania voted in favour. Soldiers voted in favour by a small majority, but again those at the front voted against, probably because they knew the hellish conditions there, and did not wish to compel men to join them.

Source 1.28 shows the results of the second referendum on conscription.

### ↓ Source 1.28

Results of the second referendum on conscription

State	Electoral roll	Ballots issued	For		Against		Informal
			Vote	%	Vote	%	
New South Wales	1 055 883	853 894	341 256	41.16	487 774	58.84	24 864
Victoria	807 331	678 806	329 772	49.79	332 490	50.21	16 544
Queensland	378 378	310 164	132 771	44.02	168 875	55.98	8 518
South Australia	261 661	197 970	86 663	44.90	106 364	55.10	4 943
Western Australia	162 347	135 593	84 116	64.39	46 522	35.61	4 955
Tasmania	106 803	78 792	38 881	50.24	38 502	49.76	1 409
Northern Territory and Federal Capital Territory	4 037	3 002	1 700	58.22	1 220	41.78	82
Total <sup>†</sup>	2 776 440	2 258 221*	1 015 159	46.21	1 181 747	53.79	61 315
<sup>†</sup> Including 199 677 votes by members of the Australian Imperial Force, of which 103 789 were for, 93 910 against, and 1978 informal.							
Results	Obtained majority in two states and the territories and an overall minority of 166 588 votes.						Not carried

Plebiscite Results, 20 December 1917, (2) Military Service, Parliament of Australia website, accessed September 2021<sup>15</sup>

## RESEARCH TASK 1.5

Was conscription used in other parts of the British Empire? Research conscription and enlistment statistics from New Zealand and Canada. From your research, how did the national debate over conscription in those nations compare with Australia's experience?

## 1.4 The use of propaganda on the home front

### INQUIRY QUESTION

What was the purpose of and how effective was the use of propaganda on the home front during World War I?

All wartime governments used **propaganda** on their respective home fronts. Australia, one of few countries to reject conscription, relied completely on volunteers for its war effort. This made war propaganda vital to maintain voluntary recruitment, especially when support for the war decreased.

Film was occasionally used for propaganda. After the landing at Gallipoli on 25 April 1915, a re-enactment of the landing was made at Tamarama Beach in Sydney in far less steep terrain than the beach at Gallipoli. The black-and-white silent film is accompanied by piano music, as films did not have embedded sound until the late 1920s.<sup>16</sup>

**propaganda** a form of persuasive communication employing facts, ideas, emotions and arguments formulated and spread in such a way as to further a cause

### FOCUS QUESTIONS 1.3

1. How do you think viewers during the war reacted to this film?
2. What emotions were being created?

Propaganda often involved colourful and striking works of art to boost enlistments or the purchase of government war bonds to finance the war effort.<sup>17</sup> A strong theme of posters was that men should enlist to experience an exciting moment in history. Posters show a member of the armed forces urging a civilian to volunteer. Some intellectuals mocked the posters; writer Martin Boyd said that they were an insult to the intelligence of any educated person. Others, such as William Harrison Moore, would have supported the sentiments expressed in these images.

The first posters were produced in Britain by the government's British Parliamentary Recruitment Committee. It created 164 different posters and printed 5.7 million copies of them. Once Britain introduced conscription in 1916, the posters were no longer necessary, and some were sent to Australia to further encourage voluntary recruitment.<sup>18</sup> The technology used did not have to be invented: the government simply adopted the existing technique of modern commercial posters. Historian Olga Tsara has used the large collection of posters in the State Library of Victoria to analyse how they developed as the war worsened.<sup>19</sup>

→ **Source 1.29** Posters saturated public spaces during World War I. This photograph shows men looking at posters that were on display outside the Melbourne Town Hall, June 1915.



## USING HISTORICAL SOURCES AS EVIDENCE 1.5

1. Analyse the posters shown in Source 1.29 and describe their message.
2. What techniques does the poster artist use to create an impact?
3. What techniques are being used in the posters to gain attention?
4. Do you think they would have been successful? Why or why not?

**camouflaged** a military vehicle painted in such a way as to hide its form and make it difficult for the enemy to see

**government bonds** a financial document issued by a government to be sold to individuals who want a safe investment. Typically, individuals choose how much they want to lend the government, and the government repays them by paying interest and by ultimately repaying the money it has borrowed.

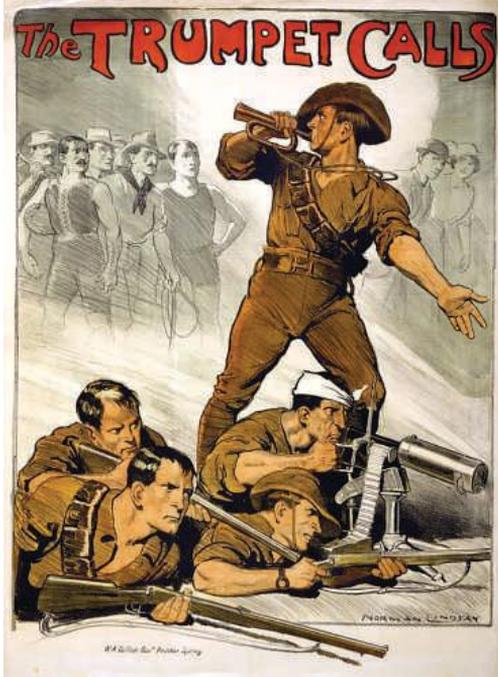


↑ **Source 1.30** By 1918, the government needed more money to fight the war, but hesitated to raise taxes. It invented a good alternative: Tank Week. On 9 April 1918, *The Adelaide Advertiser* reported: 'Tank week began in Sydney this morning when a much-**camouflaged** monster came to pause in Martin Place. From its deck there immediately opened a battery of four-minute appeals [requests to buy **government bonds**]. By the time the tank moved off to resume the attack on Balmain, 150 000 pounds had been subscribed.'<sup>20</sup>

### Images of combat

**No Man's Land** the open space lying between the trenches and defences of the Germans and their allies, and those of the British and their allies during World War I

Initially, images of combat were general and idealised, with noble soldiers manfully defending the innocent and the helpless. As the war worsened, artists showed combat more frankly, showing horrific explosions, wounded men dying in **No Man's Land**, or devastated bombed cities. Olga Tsara believes that this had two purposes: (a) by emphasising the horrors our troops were suffering, it would inspire men to enlist, and (b) make civilians realise that their problems were minor by comparison.



← **Source 1.31** *The Trumpet Calls*, Norman Lindsay, circa 1915

### USING HISTORICAL SOURCES AS EVIDENCE 1.6

1. Analyse Norman Lindsay's image in Source 1.31. List what he draws and why.
2. What emotions are being created by the artist?

### The image of war as a sport



← **Source 1.32** *Join together, train together, embark together, fight together*, artist unknown, circa 1915

Olga Tsara has investigated the theme of sport in propaganda.

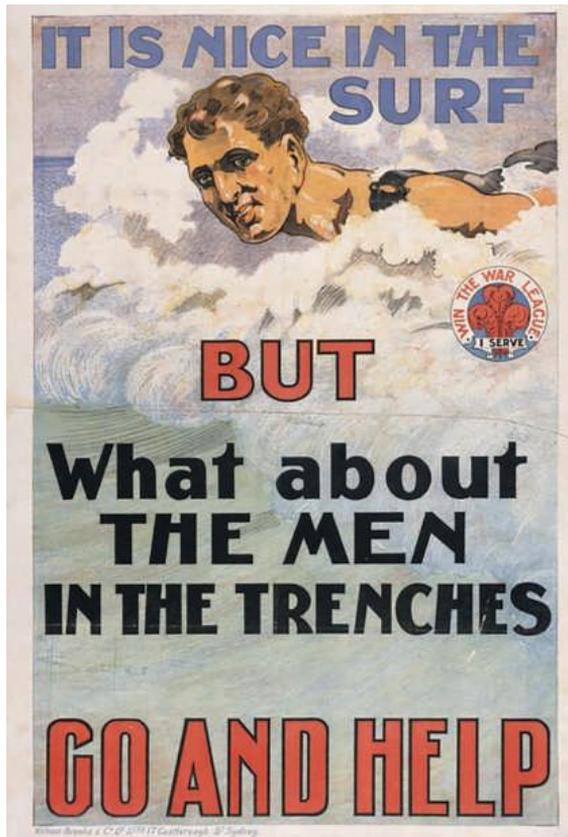
**Source 1.33**

Sport was an important part of Australian culture and the war was presented as 'the greater game'. A Sportsmen's Recruiting Committee was formed aiming to raise the Sportsmen's thousand. The Troedel printing company in Melbourne produced at least three posters for this campaign. Two of these show Albert Jacka, the first of nine Australian soldiers to be awarded a Victoria Cross medal during the Gallipoli campaign. He came to be known as the ultimate 'mate', and to embody the qualities of virility, sportsmanship, loyalty and honour.

Olga Tsara, World War I posters from the State Library Victoria collection.  
*The LaTrobe Library Journal*, no. 98, September, 2016, p. 66.

**Manipulation by disapproval and guilt**

As the horrific losses mounted late in the war, and recruiting declined, a new urgency crept into propaganda messages. People were urged to join up and made to feel guilty or morally unworthy if they did not do so. The poster in Source 1.34 was commissioned by the Win the War League. It is an example of this disapproval.



← **Source 1.34** It is nice in the surf, but what about the men in the trenches? Go and help, David Souter, circa 1917

## Fanciful fears of invasion



↑ **Source 1.35** *Will you fight now or wait for this*, Norman Lindsay, circa 1915

Propaganda posters influenced people's decisions by playing on their emotions. One of the most famous Australian posters is also the most misleading. Source 1.35 shows a dramatic poster by Norman Lindsay. It suggests that if Australian men do not enlist, Australia would be invaded by Germany. Historically, this was never a possibility during World War I. Lindsay paints a frightening scene of brutish Germans attacking a family on an Australian farm. Australians immediately thought of atrocity stories about real and alleged German cruelty to civilians when they invaded Belgium. The scene is so frightening that few people would have stopped to think rationally that Germany was not likely to attack Australia.

## Demonising the enemy



**The Hun** an insulting term used by the British and their allies to describe Germans, especially soldiers, during World War I and World War II. It suggests that Germans are brutal, destructive and uncivilised.

↑ **Source 1.36** Norman Lindsay, circa 1917

Propaganda created enthusiasm for the war by depicting the enemy in the worst possible light. Lindsay's poster in Source 1.36 shows the enemy as a monstrous ape that wants to take over the world. This process is called 'bestialisation', representing a human being with crude, ugly features that make him look like an animal. Factual accuracy is not an issue in propaganda: this image shows the creature wearing the spiked helmet traditionally associated with 'the Hun', but in fact these were discarded by the German Army early in the war.

## USING HISTORICAL SOURCES AS EVIDENCE 1.7

1. What were the main purposes of propaganda posters?
2. In what ways did propaganda artists make the enemy look both evil and beast-like?
3. See Source 1.35. Why might Norman Lindsay have depicted a German invasion of Australia when no such possibility actually existed?
4. What is the implied criticism of Norman Lindsay's depiction of a fit young man enjoying the surf in Source 1.34?
5. Group discussion point: If Australia were to go to war in our own time, do you think that our generation would still be influenced by propaganda images of this sort?

### 1.5 Chapter summary

Here are some dot-points for you to consider and add to:

#### Continuity

- In terms of national identity and feeling, Australians continued to proudly identify themselves as part of the British Empire.
- In terms of foreign policy, Australia retained a close defence relationship with Britain.
- In political terms, Australia remained a democracy and a constitutional monarchy.
- At the end of the war, when troops returned, women again found their access to the workplace reduced in many cases.

#### Change

- In political terms, the *War Precautions Act* 1914 gave the government sweeping powers to control and direct the Australian economy and society.
- In economic terms, Australia was forced to improve its industrial base. The war disrupted shipping and reduced the flow of imported goods into the country. Australia set about increasing its manufacturing businesses, so that it could produce its own goods and not rely on imports. One of the most important of the new industries was iron and steel manufacturing. This was especially crucial because the war itself had cut off Australia's access to these commodities from countries such as Germany and Belgium.
- In social terms, working people found that the government's need to speed up the economy resulted in attacks on the trade unions and some loss of labour rights. It was not felt to be 'patriotic' to go on strike.

## 1.6 End-of-chapter activities

### Consolidating your understanding

Complete the following questions to help revise the key events, ideas, perspectives and experiences that shaped the home front experience in Australia between 1914 and 1918.

1. Why were Australians generally very keen to support Britain during World War I?
2. For what reasons did the Australian Government seek to increase its powers to control people on the home front?
3. What were the purposes of censorship on the home front?
4. What were the main terms of the *War Precautions Act* 1914?
5. Why was the issue of conscription extremely controversial in Australia?
6. What were the main arguments in favour of conscription?
7. What were the main arguments against conscription?
8. Why did the trade unions and working people generally oppose conscription?
9. What were the results of the first referendum (1916) and the second referendum (1917) on conscription?
10. What were the purposes of propaganda on the home front?

### Evaluating the historical significance of ideas and events

#### Using annotated timelines for effective exam preparation

In all historical writing, the most basic skill is that of correctly naming a key event and showing that you know why it is important to that moment in history. You might notice that many chronologies (lists of dates) have only two columns: the date and the name of the event.

Date	Event
5 August 1914	Australia declares its support of Britain in its war on Germany

That is a useful start: you will gain *some* marks by proving that you can name the event and give its correct date.

But your writing in an examination situation actually demands more than that. You also really need to be able to confidently say *what happened* (briefly and clearly) and, above all, to be able to say *what its significance was* at the time. Of course, history is not just a string of dates – to be recited like a story – but a sequence of events and dates to provide factual evidence that can back up the argument (analysis) you are making. To really master this factual material, you could consider using a four-column list of events, which will challenge you to fill in the two most important aspects of an event: what happened and what its significance was.

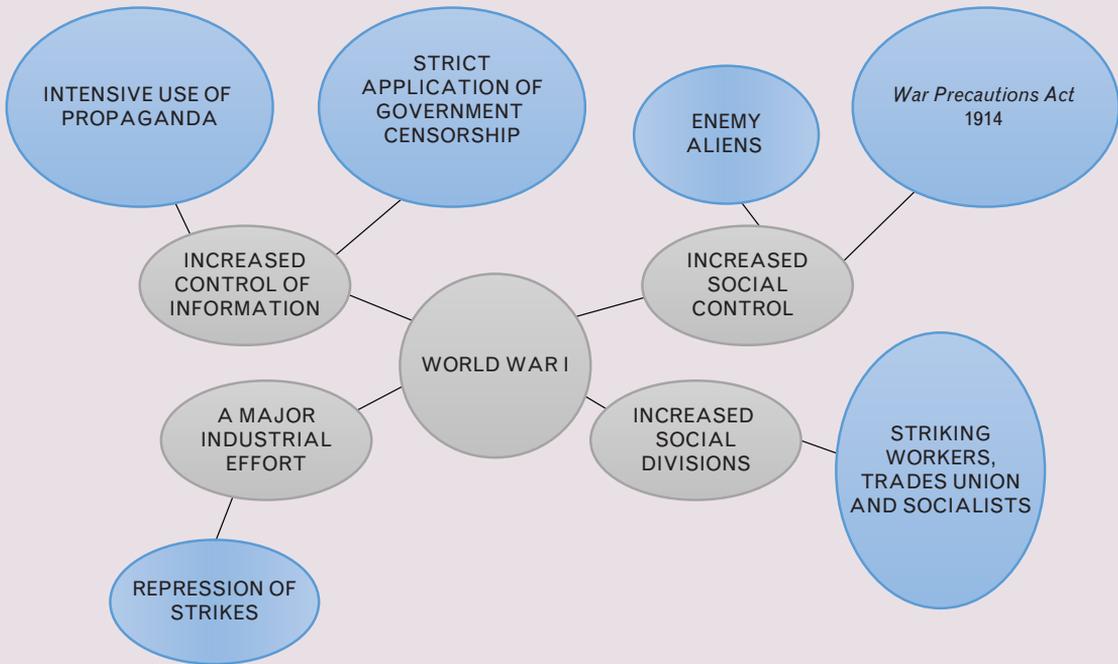
To prepare yourself for the examination, fill out the grid below.

### Key dates and events: World War I

Date	Event	What happened?	What was its significance to Australia?
5 August 1914	Australia's declaration of war on Germany in support of Britain	As soon as Britain declared war on Germany, Australia automatically did so as well	Participation in a major war would cause massive casualties and also change Australian society forever
15 August 1914	Founding of the Australian Imperial Force	Australia created its own military force to send to assist Britain	Australia proved that it could be an important military ally to Britain in a major conflict
29 October 1914	The <i>War Precautions Act</i> 1914		
28 October 1916	The first referendum on conscription fails		
20 December 1917	The second referendum on conscription fails		

## Evaluating the historical significance of World War I in changing Australia society

Add further details to the following mind map outlining the impacts of the war effort on Australian society during World War I.



1. As a class rank the impacts of the war emergency on Australian society on the home front.
2. How justified do you think the increasing social control of the Australian people was in the context of a war emergency?
3. How justified do you think the increasing control of information was in the context of the war situation?
4. What were the positives and the negatives of the war emergency in terms of the Australian economy?
5. Debrief as a class. Having listened to your classmates' arguments and rankings, would you change yours? If so, which ones and why?

### Constructing an argument: essay writing

1. To what extent did World War I create new experiences and employment opportunities for Australian women?
2. To what extent did World War I allow Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people to enjoy greater participation in the workplace?
3. In what ways was World War I the most divisive war in Australia's history?

## Extension reading

Michael McKernan, *The Australian People and the Great War*, Melbourne: Thomas Nelson, 1980.

This superb publication is one of a handful of truly great classics of historical writing about the home front. Each chapter takes a different theme, and is like a mirror held up to a different aspect of the war. McKernan examines, in turn, important themes such as the state of Australia when war broke out, reactions to the outbreak, the role of schools in forming opinions of the war, the experiences of Australian women, the experiences of people in the countryside and the treatment of 'enemy subjects' such as people with German heritage.

Department of Veterans' Affairs, *Australians in World War I: Home Front*, Melbourne: Department of Veterans' Affairs, 2011.

This government publication is a masterly collection of full-page photographs of different aspects of the home front, each accompanied by detailed and informative captions. The selection is broad, and includes a number of photographs that are not commonly seen; they also cover almost every major aspect of the home front experience.

Joan Beaumont, *Broken Nation: Australians in the Great War*, Allen & Unwin, 2014.

This publication places Australia's war within the broader context of the wider war and the story of the war within Australia.

# WOMEN OF QUEENSLAND!

REMEMBER  
HOW  
WOMEN  
AND  
CHILDREN  
OF  
FRANCE  
AND  
BELGIUM  
WERE  
TREATED

DO YOU  
REALISE  
THAT  
YOUR  
TREATMENT  
WOULD  
- BE -  
WORSE

## CHAPTER 2

The perspectives and experiences of different social groups on the home front, 1914–1918

SEND A MAN TO-DAY  
TO FIGHT FOR YOU

## Chapter timeline

World events	Date	Australian events
<b>28 June 1914:</b> Archduke Franz Ferdinand is assassinated, triggering tensions between European powers	<b>1914</b>	Unemployment in Australia increases from 5.9 per cent to 11 per cent
<b>30 January 1915:</b> Germany makes its first use of gas in warfare	<b>1915</b>	Feminist-pacifist Eleanor Moore founds the Sisterhood of International Peace in Melbourne and Vida Goldstein founds the Women's Peace Army, also in Melbourne
<b>18 February 1915:</b> Germany launches its U-boat campaign in British waters	<b>1915</b>	<b>25th April 1915:</b> Gallipoli landing: a key event in the formation of a national identity <b>6 September 1915:</b> The Aborigines Act forces Indigenous people to live on reserves. This was an Act consolidating the law relating to 'Aboriginal Natives of Victoria', passed by the Victorian parliament
<b>21 February 1916:</b> The start of the Battle of Verdun	<b>1916</b>	<b>1916:</b> Some 2000 Australian workers join the radical party, Industrial Workers of the World
<b>6 April 1917:</b> The United States of America declares war on Germany	<b>1917</b>	<b>August–September 1917:</b> Some 100 000 workers join the Great Strike, mainly in New South Wales but also in Victoria
<b>29 August 1917:</b> Canada passes the War Service Act, giving the government the right to conscript people into the armed forces	<b>1917</b>	<b>October 1917:</b> Existing restrictions on Indigenous Australians serving in the armed forces were relaxed, allowing 'half-castes' to serve
<b>31 October 1917:</b> The Battle of Beersheba captures a key city in southern Palestine from Turkish/German forces	<b>1917</b>	<b>8 November 1917:</b> South Australia's Nomenclature Act permits the changing of place names that sound German
<b>7 November 1917:</b> Revolution in Russia brings Lenin and the Communists to power	<b>1917</b>	
<b>11 November 1918:</b> The Armistice brings an end to fighting		<b>1919:</b> Paris Peace Conference: Hughes represents Australia rather than Britain and refuses to support Japan's demands for a racial equality clause in the League of Nations Covenant

### A note on the opening image

This poster, made during the Great War, makes an emotional appeal by the Australian Government to encourage women to use their influence to persuade men to enlist in the armed forces. To add force to its message, it refers to German atrocities – real and imagined – against women and children civilians in Belgium and France. There was, in fact, an organisation in Australia whose members each had the task of persuading at least one man to enlist. Such appeals gained new urgency when the referenda on conscription for overseas service failed in 1916 and 1917.

## 2.1 Introduction

### INQUIRY QUESTION

Why might different social groups have quite different experiences of the home front during the war?

**patriotically** to act to show your love and loyalty to your country  
**grievances** the concerns of a person or group about some form of unjust or unfair treatment

When any nation experiences an emergency like war, the official view is that all people, by being citizens, must react loyally and **patriotically**. There is no tolerance of individual **grievances** and personal reactions. This view is understandable, but historians know that, in a crisis, different groups have very different experiences, depending on their age, their wealth, their sex or their ethnicity. The historian must look beyond the 'official' view, to discover different perspectives and how various groups experienced the war and responded to it. Factory employers made massive profits, but did experience difficulty finding trained staff. Factory workers enjoyed hundreds of extra hours of paid work, but found their trade unions and labour rights under threat. Indigenous Australians, as well as women, were not initially welcomed into the workforce, but later gained access to jobs when manpower was limited.

## 2.2 The experiences of working people on the home front

### INQUIRY QUESTION

To what extent did World War I decrease the rights of working people and cause industrial conflict?

By the start of the Twentieth century, Australia had developed a reputation as a 'working man's paradise'. It was seen by many settlers as a place that was free of the social hierarchies of 'home', a place that offered employment and the means to a comfortable life for all. The working people of city and country suffered considerably as a result of the war. The war quickly impacted the Australian economy because Australia's export-dependent trade suffered from the decrease in exports to European countries, worsened by a lack of shipping to carry products abroad. In New South Wales, many men lost their jobs in the coal industry. In the country, too, the timber industry laid off many workers. At the start of 1914, unemployment stood at 5.9 per cent; by the end of the year it had nearly doubled to 11.0 per cent. Many unemployed men volunteered for war service:

**purchasing power** an economic measure of how many goods and services working people can buy with their wage at a given time

the daily soldier's wage of five shillings (or six shillings once abroad) was a good income for desperate people. For those still employed, the slow rate of increase in wages did not keep up with the rapid inflation of prices for basic commodities, causing further hardship and hence resentment. Between 1914 and 1915, the **purchasing power** of workers fell by 10 per cent, and continued to fall in subsequent years.

### The radicalisation of the labour movement

**treason** betrayal of one's country, for example, by assisting the enemy in any way

Historian Stuart Macintyre has clarified the protest actions of workers and trade unions. Wealthy classes, such as the industrialists, condemned worker action as pure selfishness during a national crisis, like **treason**. In

this, they were encouraged by the Labor Prime Minister, Billy Hughes, who abandoned the traditional policy of his party – to support the interests of working people – in order to fight the war effectively. Macintyre found that this betrayal of class interests radicalised working people of the rank-and-file membership, who now distrusted both their trade union leaders and the federal government. Betrayed, they adopted more radical ideas, such as those of the Industrial Workers of the World (the IWW, or ‘Wobblies’): by late 1916, this organisation had 2000 working members.<sup>1</sup>

### ‘Judas’ Hughes

Workers’ anger was focused on the Prime Minister, Billy Hughes. But the government’s political posters and pamphlets need to be viewed with caution. Hughes did, sometimes, listen to worker grievances, admittedly to resolve strikes in essential services such as the coal industry.

## RESEARCH TASK 2.1

Look up the *Trading with the Enemy Act* 1914. What significance did this have for different Australian industries and workers?



↑ **Source 2.1** Prime Minister Billy Hughes, 1919

## The Great Strike, 1917

It was dangerously easy to condemn the traditional right to strike as being disloyal during an unprecedented war crisis. During the war, prices had outpaced wages inflicting hardship on many families. In 1917, the New South Wales Railways attempted to introduce a time-card system. The workers saw this as an invasive attempt to speed up and check on their work. Strike leaders condemned this as ‘Americanising the workforce’, or ‘robotism’.<sup>2</sup> The newspaper *The Co-Operator* wrote:

Scientific management seeks to make the task of the worker more monotonous than it ever was, to take from his work the last vestige of individuality, and to make him a mere cog in the machinery of production.

**Source 2.2**

Quoted in Ian Bushnell, ‘The Great Strike of 1917’, September 2017, National Library of Australia, *Trove* website, accessed August 2021.<sup>3</sup>

The railway workers went on strike. Soon, a state-wide strike developed, closing down coal mines, port facilities and a number of industries. In all, some 100 000 workers went on strike. The strike finished in September, without success, although workers had asserted their grievances and their right to the non-violent withdrawal of their labour. The government responded harshly: the unions involved were deregistered (meaning it was illegal to continue activity), their leaders were arrested, and workers were sacked and replaced with ‘reliable’ volunteers including farmers and university students. Hughes punished the striking Waterside Workers’ Federation, making it illegal to interfere with loading of ships. Workers who had lost their jobs regarded their replacements as ‘scabs’ (slang for strike breakers) but admitted that the union movement had lost.

## 2.3 The experiences of women on the home front

### INQUIRY QUESTION

To what extent did World War I create new and lasting opportunities for women in the workforce and the charities?

Another group fighting for their rights was the women of Australia. Initially, women could not enter the armed forces; even the 2000 nurses who served the Army abroad were denied the dignity of a military rank.<sup>4</sup> On the home front, some women were eventually able to enter the workforce. For instance, 700 women worked at the Colonial Ammunition Company in Footscray, Melbourne, making bullets for the Lee Enfield 303 rifle. Their story is told by Judy Maddigan.<sup>5</sup> However, the number of women in the workforce was far fewer than in other comparable countries at the time. Historian Stuart Macintyre detected some changes in the roles of women:

#### Source 2.3

It was expected that women would **keep the home fires burning** and provide comforts for their protectors. Fund raising, nursing, knitting socks and balaclavas, sending messages of support and various forms of self-sacrifice did in fact absorb the energies of many women, but in other respects loosened conventional restraints. It allowed females to replace males in the workplace, gave some women a respite from the duties of marriage and [...] made single parents of those whose husbands had volunteered. That military service became a convenient means of desertion was tacitly acknowledged when the government began **remitting** to wives the bulk of the pay of married men on overseas service.

#### keep the home fires burning

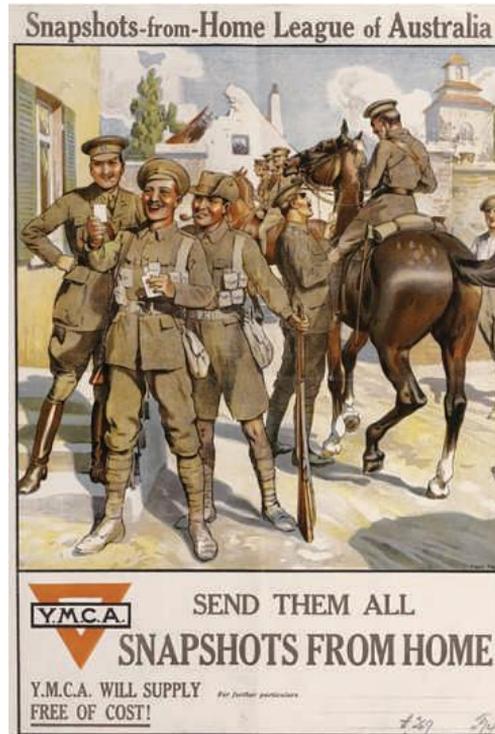
a poetic phrase meaning that women would continue to run the household while their men were at war **remitting** to send money to somebody

Stuart Macintyre, *A Concise History of Australia*. Melbourne: Cambridge University Press, 2010, p. 15.

→ **Source 2.4** The provision of comforts for troops at the front was an important activity. In Melbourne, Lady Munro Ferguson turned the ballroom of Government House into a vast centre for making care packages. Across Australia, women put in 10 million hours of work to knit 1354328 pairs of socks for the troops.<sup>6</sup>



## The Snapshots-from-Home League of Australia



↑ **Source 2.5** The Snapshots-from-Home League of Australia was a charity established by Mr A.B. Pursell, director of the Sydney YMCA in 1916, after he had seen a similar league operating in Britain. This Australian poster is also a direct copy of a British original.<sup>7</sup>

Apart from sending physical comforts to soldiers, Australian women correctly guessed that images from home could lift **morale** amidst the misery of the trenches. The Snapshots-from-Home League of Australia stated its aim to be to ‘fight the invisible enemy of men at the front [...] heart-hunger, loneliness, isolation, homesickness’. Some 6000 volunteers across Australia took 150 000 photographs, showing wives and children and the family home. These were mailed to the men at the front. As this poster suggests, this simple process did improve soldiers’ morale.

**morale** the overall psychological state of a person or group of people, especially when in a dangerous or difficult situation; low morale can come from defeat, exhaustion, illness or hunger

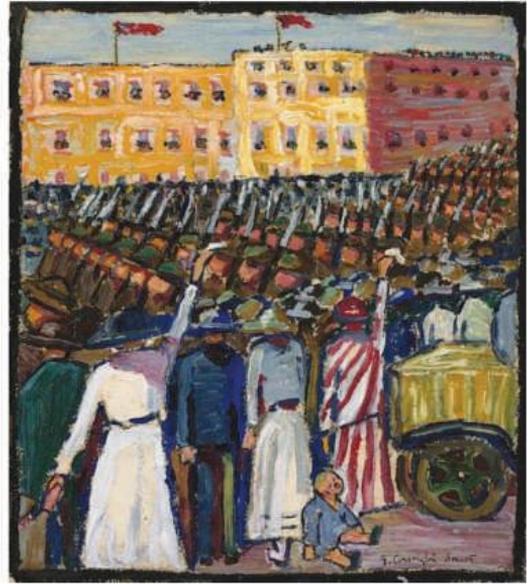
Women also volunteered in recruiting drives undertaken by the One Woman, One Recruit League or the Universal Service League, which demanded that their members each encourage at least one man to volunteer.

Some female artists played a role in recording the experience of war. Historian Catherine Speck has written about an artist, Grace Cossington Smith, who did more than record what she saw. She like many other women supported the campaign for conscription. The government actively created posters to encourage women to assist recruiting with questions such as ‘Do you realize that the word “Go” from you may send another man to fight for King and Country?’ Cossington Smith was devastated when the first referendum on conscription failed and wrote bitterly that she detested the people who did not see the need to send more men to fight.

## RESEARCH TASK 2.2

Look up Cossington Smith's 1915 painting, *The Sock Knitter*. To what extent does it capture the role that most Australian women played in World War I?

→ **Source 2.6** Grace Cossington Smith (Australia, b.1892, d.1984) *Reinforcements: troops marching* (circa 1917) oil on paper on hardboard, 23.7 x 21.5 cm Art Gallery of New South Wales Purchased 1967 © Estate of Grace Cossington Smith Photo: AGNSW OA5.1967



In Source 2.7, Catherine Speck analyses Cossington Smith's painting.

### Source 2.7

**proactive** taking the initiative

A cursory look at 'Reinforcements: Troops Marching', c.1917 leads the viewer to focus on the middle ground, where troops are marching off to war. However, it is the women in the foreground, with their backs to the viewer and waving to the troops, who are central to understanding the painting. The patriotic colour of their clothing in reds, whites and blues, the colours of the Australian flag, is one clue. But another clue is their arm waving. They are both farewelling the departing troops and signaling that their labour and encouragement assisted the men to enlist. Cossington Smith's patriotic colours are also imbued with messages of optimism about the war's outcome. The painting represents women as **proactive**, maternal citizens who found ways to assist once their other, more direct, attempts failed.

Catherine Speck, *Painting Ghosts: Australian Women Artists in Wartime*, Melbourne: Craftsman House, 2004, p. 57.

## USING HISTORICAL SOURCES AS EVIDENCE 2.1

1. Examine Source 2.7. What does Speck say was Cossington Smith's position in the conscription debate?
2. Why did Cossington Smith take that position, when so many other women opposed it?
3. Why does Speck believe that the women bystanders are as important as the marching soldiers?
4. How and why does the painting in Source 2.6 go beyond simply recording the home front?

## Vida Goldstein and the internationalist movement

While women's action to provide supplies and comforts to the troops in the trenches was significant, other female activists participated in a broader intellectual discussion about war. Historian Kate Laing has found that this important contribution was, for many years, overlooked and neglected by historians who wrote about the home front. More recently, historians have drawn attention to the significant achievements of this women's movement.<sup>8</sup>

Female activists such as Vida Goldstein criticised **imperialism**, arguing that Australia joined the war automatically, being part of the British Empire. She and other intellectuals questioned whether war was the best way of solving international conflicts and suggested that **internationalism** might be a better way of keeping the peace. In 1915, Goldstein and Eleanor Moore founded two important organisations in Melbourne: the Sisterhood of International Peace and the Women's Peace Army. These two groups later joined the broader organisation, The Women's International League for Peace and Freedom, which is still operating today as a feminist-pacifist organisation.<sup>9</sup>

In Source 2.8, Vida Goldstein is shown campaigning and selling copies of her internationalist newspaper, *Votes for Women*. Historians know when a publication has been effective if the authorities move to close it down. In her case, this happened very early indeed – in September 1914, before the *War Precautions Act, 1914* (Cth) was passed. The government sent troops to raid her office, and attempted to shut the publication down.

In her journal *The Woman Voter*, Goldstein wrote:

The time has come for women to show that they, as givers of life, refuse to give their sons as material for slaughter, and that they recognize that human life must be the first consideration of nations ... the enfranchised women of Australia are political units in the British Empire, and they ought to lead the world in sane methods of dealing with these conflicts.

Vida Goldstein, cited in Kate Laing, World war and worldly women: The Great War and the formation of the Women's International League for Peace and freedom in Australia, *The LaTrobe Journal: Victoria and the Great War*, no. 96, September, 2015, p. 121.

### RESEARCH TASK 2.3

Find out more about Vida Goldstein in the *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, available at <https://cambridge.edu.au/redirect/9686>. Also, look up the lyrics to 'I Didn't Raise my Son to be a Soldier' from 1915. This song was sung at Women's Peace Army meetings, until they were shut down. You can access the lyrics here: <https://cambridge.edu.au/redirect/9704>



↑ Source 2.8 Vida Goldstein campaigning and selling copies of her internationalist newspaper, *Votes for Women*

### Source 2.9

**imperialism** in this context, this term implies that Australia would take actions – such as going to war – simply because it was a part of the British Empire

**internationalism** in this context, the word refers to the idea of international co-operation and a quest for resolution of problems by peaceful means instead of war

## Other feminist-pacifists

Eleanor Moore was another influential feminist-pacifist. Encouraged by the Reverend Charles Strong of Melbourne's Peace Society, Moore formed The Sisterhood for International Peace in Melbourne in 1915, which limited membership to women only. She argued in 1919:

### Source 2.10

The women of Australia, being fully enfranchised, have a double privilege and a responsibility but naturally, here as elsewhere, many are still completely under the sway of the traditional belief that war is the only honourable way of settling international disputes [...] The improved education which girls in all civilized lands have received of late years, aided by the increasing industrial freedom of women, must lend to more independent thinking on their part, in which the true instincts of their sex will find expression, and since women nowhere band themselves together for the destruction of other women, it is evident that a martial spirit is really foreign to their nature.

Eleanor Moore, cited in Kate Laing, *World war and worldly women: The Great War and the formation of the Women's International League for Peace and freedom in Australia*, *The LaTrobe Journal: Victoria and the Great War*, no. 96, September, 2015, p. 123.



↑ **Source 2.11** This photograph shows the feminist-pacifist intellectuals who challenged the idea of war as a solution to international problems. The Committee of the Sisterhood of International Peace proposed that international co-operation would be a more humane and effective way of avoiding world conflicts. This photograph was taken in 1915, the year of the committee's foundation.

Feminist-pacifist activists were viewed as dangerous and were targeted by some returned servicemen, who regarded their ideas as cowardly and treasonable. Some women activists were arrested and charged under the War Precautions Act for minor crimes, such as defacing government recruiting posters, discouraging volunteers, and public protest. Some activists prudently accepted their punishment, but others protested.

The Women's Political Association challenged the Act. Adela Pankhurst led a demonstration to break into Parliament to demand that the Prime Minister reduce food prices. She ended up in the High Court, where a policeman reported:

... the three accused, with several other women, came into the Treasury Gardens. There were between five thousand and six thousand people present, and the defendant Adela Constantia Mary Pankhurst got up on a seat and addressed the people assembled, and told them to follow her to Parliament House in defiance of the police and to break in if necessary, and see what Billy Hughes was going to do to get cheaper food for the starving people ... then Adela Constantia Mary Pankhurst and Alice Suter and Jennie Baines went towards the steps of Parliament House arm-in-arm, and followed by the crowd of people.

Source 2.12

Cited in Kate Laing, World war and worldly women: The Great War and the formation of the Women's International League for Peace and freedom in Australia, *The LaTrobe Journal: Victoria and the Great War*, no. 96, September 2015, p. 125.



↑ Source 2.13 In this scene, the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom holds a rally for disarmament at Yarra Park in 1921. No men are present but note the presence of two young girls. To judge by their dress, these women are probably all from educated middle-class families.

## 2.4 The experiences of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people on the home front

### INQUIRY QUESTION

To what extent did World War I create new and lasting opportunities and rights for Aboriginal Australians and Torres Strait Islanders?

In 1914, Aboriginal Australians were not allowed to join the Army. Later, as the casualties mounted – and volunteering decreased – some Indigenous people were allowed to enlist especially after October 1917, but under special conditions. Because of the imprecise nature of some war records – which did not always mention whether a volunteer was Indigenous – we will never know how many Indigenous Australians actually served. However, it is estimated that about 1000 Indigenous men served in World War I.

Little evidence survives as to Indigenous motives for serving. Australian War Memorial historians state:

#### Source 2.14

**incentive** anything positive that encourages people to do certain actions

It is not known what motivated Indigenous Australians to join the Australian Imperial Force (AIF), but loyalty and patriotism doubtless played a part. There was also the **incentive** of a receiving a wage. Indigenous soldiers were paid the same rate as non-Indigenous soldiers. In general, Indigenous soldiers served under the same conditions of service as other members of the AIF, with many experiencing in the Army equal treatment for the first time in their lives.

‘Aboriginal service in the First World War’, Australian War Memorial website, accessed August 2021.<sup>10</sup>

Historian Claire Phelps also investigated Indigenous volunteering, and found that it was primarily the poor conditions faced at home that led Indigenous men to volunteer.

#### Source 2.15

Despite the broad discrimination experienced by Aborigines in Australia, the desire amongst Indigenous men to enlist in the AIF was widespread. At the time of World War One, racism and segregation were rife on the home front and Aborigines faced low wages, limited rights and poor living conditions; they did not hold the right to vote, nor were they included in the national census. Aboriginal men saw enlistment in the AIF as an escape from these conditions. In contrast to the prejudicial barriers faced back home, participation in the war gave Indigenous men a sense of empowerment, new economic opportunities, and a sense of equality. As members of the AIF, Aboriginal soldiers were treated as equals to white men: they were employed under the same conditions as other soldiers,

received the same wages, and, for the most part, were accepted without prejudice. For many Aborigines, this was their first experience of treatment equal to the white enlistees.

Claire Phelps, *Aboriginal Contribution to Australian War Efforts: Proving Their Citizenship?* *Modern History Initiates*, vol. 2, no. 1, April 2014, pp. 82–3.

Historian Richard Broome has discovered that one in three of eligible Victorian Aboriginal people volunteered and served in the war, the same percentage as by other Victorians. He added:

However, the Aboriginal sacrifice was greater; eight of the 42 Aboriginal servicemen being killed in action, approximately one in five, while one in eight of all Victorian servicemen died in action or from wounds ... Several Aboriginal men served with distinction. Private William Rawlings, son of Billy and Bessie Rawlings of Purnim near Framlingham and Corporal Harry (Henry) Thorpe, son of William and Lillian Thorpe of the Lake Tyers area, were both awarded the military medal after enlisting in the 7th Battalion in early 1916. While one in every 42 enlisted men in the AIF earned the military medal, two out of the 42 Aboriginal Victorians who enlisted did so. Rawlings earned the military medal for storming and destroying a German machine gun pill-box and its defenders with grenades. Harry Thorpe suffered gunshot wounds at Pozières in 1916 and at Bullecourt in 1917. He became lance corporal in 1917. After showing initiative and displaying bravery in mopping up enemy dugouts and pill-boxes he was promoted to corporal and awarded the military medal in October 1917. Both Rawlings and Thorpe were killed in action at Vauvillers on the Somme, and on the same day – 8 August 1918 – three months and three days short of the Armistice. Their bodies lie blended with French soil at Heath cemetery, Harbonnières on the Somme.

Source 2.16

**pill-box** a popular name for a concrete structure in which soldiers could take shelter

Richard Broome, *Aboriginal Victorians: A History Since 1800*, Sydney: Allen & Unwin, 2005, p. 201.



← Source 2.17 Private Harry Thorpe

## Indigenous experiences: The 'Great Australian Silence'

For decades the war service of Indigenous peoples was ignored.<sup>11</sup> For instance, Ernest Scott's home front volume of the *Official History of Australia in the War of 1914–1918* (published in 1936) did not record Indigenous people's home front experience.

Recently, Samuel Furphy has begun to address that neglect. Joan Beaumont and Allison Cadzow have also researched this area, and edited the 2018 book, *Serving Our Country: Indigenous Australians, War, Defence and Citizenship*. Beaumont argues the home front is 'an essential part of the national experience of war'.<sup>12</sup>



↑ **Source 2.18** This photograph shows an Indigenous woman, known as Black Fanny, who was an exuberant member of the Port Lincoln community. On occasion, she would dress as a Victory Girl in red, blue and white, and pose with local soldiers.

**reserves** an area of land set aside to allow a certain group of people to live there safely

**mission** an institution designed to educate a group of people, and often to teach them a particular religious faith

By 1914, Indigenous people were coming under greater legislative restrictions through Aboriginal Acts in most Australian states, which limited their movements, controlled their wages, and controlled most aspects of their lives on government **reserves** and **missions**. While many in Victoria lived off reserves, about a third still lived at Lake Tyers and Framlingham. In other parts of Australia, the Acts were more newly formed: Queensland (1897), Western Australia (1905), Northern Territory (1911) and NSW (1909, 1915). Many Indigenous servicemen returned to civilian life to experience an even greater degree of discriminatory government legislation.

Those on reserves in Victoria faced greater control from the Aborigines Protection Board under the *Aborigines Act, 1915* (Vic) and additional regulations (1916). In New South Wales, the Protection Board began an aggressive children removal policy from 1909, with 1427 children (about one in 10) removed between 1912 and 1938.<sup>13</sup>

## Loyalty and patriotism

Given that Indigenous people experienced increasing government control, it is remarkable that so many enthusiastically joined in community activities to raise money and to donate goods for the war effort. Humble community events, such as fundraising celebrations, are temporary, and are not always mentioned in formal histories. However, they are good indicators of public feeling across Australia during a war crisis.

At Wondai (Queensland), people from the Cherbourg Aboriginal Settlement contributed to fundraising efforts by skillful demonstrations of boomerang and spear throwing. At Copmanhurst, Aboriginal people staged a **corroboree** to raise money for the Belgium Fund.

**corroboree** any social gathering of Indigenous Australians, ranging from informal dances to sacred religious ceremonies

Historian Samuel Furphy asks why these displays took place. Were Indigenous people free to choose, or were they directed by white missionaries or reserve managers to participate? Given over 1000 Indigenous men enlisted, often before the rules officially allowed them to, it is likely that most civilian fundraising activities were freely given patriotic acts.

If Indigenous people did participate freely, without being ordered to, it might have also been a strategy to assert that they too could be good citizens. Furphy concludes: 'It is likely that Aboriginal loyalty on the home front, like Aboriginal enlistment, was partly motivated by an expectation that demonstrating good citizenship might result in better treatment for Aboriginal people as citizens. Certainly, this expectation was made explicit by Aboriginal activists after the war'.<sup>14</sup>

However, few Indigenous people gained from serving their country, either on the battlefield or home front. Richard Broome states that while 'Aboriginal servicemen fought for "freedom from tyranny" at Gallipoli and then in France, the Board increasingly controlled the lives of their families back home'.<sup>15</sup> And those who applied for soldier settler blocks of land under a government scheme were often refused. Claire Phelps cites one anonymous Indigenous soldier's bitter comment upon his return:

There were three of us went to the Great War out of my family, one was killed. I always thought that fighting for our King and Country would make me **naturalise[d]** British subject and a man with freedom in the country but ... they place me under the Act and put me on settlement like a dog. It seems as if the chief protector thinks that a returned soldier doesn't want justice.

### Source 2.19

**naturalised** in this context, Indigenous people would be granted full Australian citizenship

Claire Phelps, *Aboriginal Contribution to Australian War Efforts: Proving Their Citizenship? Modern History Initiates*, vol. 2, no. 1, April 2014, pp. 83.

Furthermore, according to the Australian War Memorial website: 'only a small percentage of settlement blocks were allocated to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander servicemen. For example, from over 9,000 soldier settlers in New South Wales, George Kennedy, George Kapeen (Capeen), Albert Bonser, Archibald Murphy, and Albert Beulah (Jeffery Burt) are the only known Aboriginal servicemen to receive blocks of land in the state.'

## 2.5 The experiences of 'enemy aliens' on the home front

### INQUIRY QUESTION

To what extent was the internment of 'enemy aliens' during World War I a necessary and just precaution?

During crises, governments and citizens can over-react and take measures which now seem excessive. Australian citizens whose names and backgrounds appeared 'foreign' were victimised, despite many living in Australia for a long time and being loyal to Australia not Germany. A. Heinicke, a music teacher at the Adelaide Conservatorium of Music, was attacked by his students, who painted a British flag on his bald head. The great Australian painter, Hans Heysen, a lover of the Australian bush, was also victimised. We may only guess at the psychological and social sufferings of these innocent Australian citizens.

**Austro-Hungarians** the people of Austria and Hungary, which at the time of the war were joined together in one large empire

**enemy aliens** 'alien' is a legal term meaning that a person is not a citizen of a certain country. An 'enemy alien' is a person who is a citizen of another country with which a nation is at war.

This process of victimisation began early in the war. Within a week of the outbreak, the government required people with German or **Austro-Hungarian** backgrounds to register themselves. In October 1914, the War Precautions Act was passed. In 1916, a new law made '**enemy aliens**' of people who, though born in Australia, had parents and grandparents of German or other 'alien' origin. In one extreme case, a *Danish* man was interned (imprisoned) for no reason, other than that his accent sounded 'German'. By 1918, there were 7000 people interned, of whom 4500 were classified as 'enemy aliens'.

In Source 2.20, historian Stuart Macintyre describes the internment process of 'enemy aliens'.

#### Source 2.20

**xenophobic** irrational fears of people who are foreign to the nation's dominant culture

**vilified** abused and defamed, made to look evil

**denunciation** making an accusation against somebody

As if to contain [...] growing rifts and affirm the threatened national identity, there was an upsurge of **xenophobic** repression. The first victims were German settlers, whose roots in this country were deep and who had previously been perhaps the most accepted of its non-British inhabitants. In the cities, they were well represented in industry, commerce and the professions, and their contribution to cultural life was considerable; in South Australia, Queensland and Victoria they created stable and prosperous farming communities. Their loyalty was hardly in question. [...] There were groups of German speakers wearing the king's uniform. How quickly the government betrayed that trust! Within six months the 'enemy aliens' who were of military age, including men who had settled in Australia decades earlier and who believed themselves to be Australian citizens, were rounded up and put in internment camps. Men and women with an established place in their local community were **vilified**, harassed and dismissed from their jobs ... Once the poisonous process began, no one was safe from **denunciation**. In 1917 it was declared an offence to Anglicise one's name.

Stuart Macintyre, *The Oxford History of Australia: Volume 4, 1901–1942, The Succeeding Age*. Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 1986, pp. 155–6.

## USING HISTORICAL SOURCES AS EVIDENCE 2.2

1. Why is the term 'alien' factually wrong when applied to the people who were arrested in Australia?
2. Examine Source 2.20. What does Macintyre see as the cause of the inexplicable injustice of internment?
3. On what grounds does Macintyre believe that the Australian Government betrayed the trust of Australian citizens of non-British background?
4. Why might the government have made it illegal to Anglicise one's name?
5. How did the Australian public victimise people with non-British backgrounds?

Historian Michael McKernan also discussed the causes of victimisation and the growth of anti-German feeling by 1915 as hope of a quick Allied victory faded.

Apart from the men who enlisted in the AIF most Australians experienced the war ... at a distance, relying on letters from the front and on newspaper reports for a feel of 'the real thing'. Many Australians seemed to regret that the battles were fought at such a distance; they longed for direct experience and meaningful war work, as the enthusiasm and frustration of Australian women showed. Exaggerated patriotism, impossible demands, flowered in this climate of unreality. The Australians needed to manufacture threats and crises to make the war real and immediate; the claim that Australia was to be the 'first prize' of a victorious Germany was a product of this atmosphere. The political turmoil of referendums and elections grew out of the need to manufacture enemies, thus Australia, it was claimed, lay at the mercy of the International Workers of the World or *Sinn Feiners*. The need to create a war situation, fraught [filled] with danger and uncertainty, affected the German residents of Australia most directly: they were the most obvious source of trouble if trouble had to be found.

Michael McKernan, *The Australian People and the Great War*. Melbourne: Thomas Nelson, 1980, p. 150.

### Source 2.21

**Sinn Fein** an Irish patriotic group, founded in 1905 to demand independence from Great Britain. The name means 'We ourselves'. Sinn Fein was behind the 1916 Easter Uprising in Dublin. Those loyal to Great Britain thought of Sinn Fein members as traitors and dangerous revolutionaries.

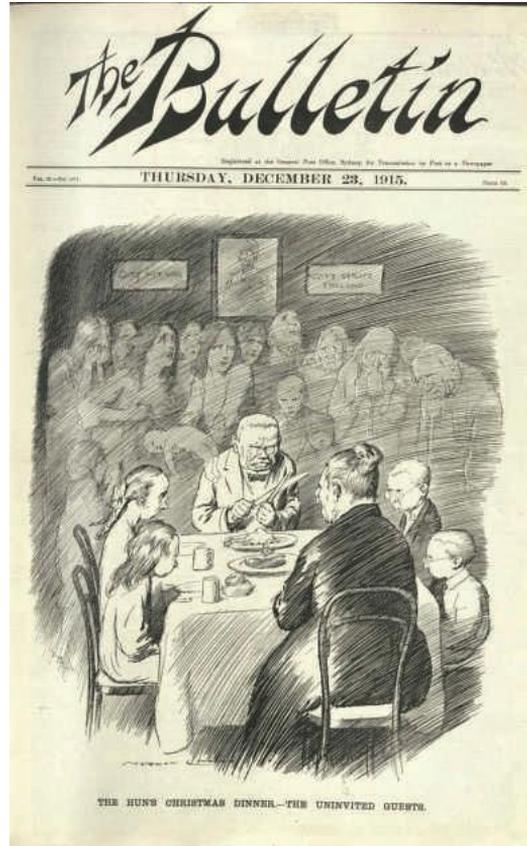
## USING HISTORICAL SOURCES AS EVIDENCE 2.3

1. Examine Source 2.21. Why, according to McKernan, did the distant war make Australians more anxious to locate internal enemies?
2. What did Australians most fear from a German victory?
3. Who were two 'enemies' within Australia and why were they feared?

## RESEARCH TASK 2.4

Look up the story of German internees at the Holsworthy Internment Camp in NSW on the NSW Migration Heritage Centre website. In your opinion, what was the legacy of the camp?

→ **Source 2.22** This cartoon, *The Hun's Christmas Dinner: The Uninvited Guests*, was drawn by Norman Lindsay in December 1915. The word 'Hun' was an insulting name used to describe Germans, and to suggest they were barbaric. A German family sits down to a big dinner, but is watched by the hungry ghosts of people who have been killed in the war.



## USING HISTORICAL SOURCES AS EVIDENCE 2.4

1. Analyse the Hun's Christmas dinner in Source 2.22, identifying who is eating, who is watching, and what claim the cartoonist is wanting to convey.
2. How do you think Australians viewing this cartoon might react?

### FOCUS QUESTION 2.1

In your view, what are the possible benefits and dangers of this sort of xenophobia by an Australian state parliament?

### Xenophobic patriotism: *The Nomenclature Act, 1917 (SA)*

Suspicion of Germans was intense in South Australia, which had a higher proportion of citizens with German backgrounds. One reaction by the South Australian Parliament was the Nomenclature Act, which changed the names of 42 towns or districts.

Chief Secretary A. H. Peake justified it by saying 'we cannot afford, and we do not want, to extend and perpetuate racial memories and feelings'.<sup>16</sup> In South Australia, the charming German settler town of Hahndorf was renamed Yantaringa.<sup>17</sup> German names were removed elsewhere from

Australia's maps. The names of war heroes were used in their place: Mount Bismarck became Mount Kitchener; Hamburg became Haig, after the British General. Names of battles were also used: Germantown Hill became Vimy Ridge, and Lobethal became Verdun.

## 2.6 Repatriation of soldiers

### INQUIRY QUESTION

How did returning servicemen fit back into Australian society?

When news of the **Armistice** signed on 11 November 1918 became known, it unleashed a flood of emotion among people who had, over recent months, gloomily feared a German victory. Expressions of joy and relief were extremely emotional.

**Armistice** an agreement to cease fighting while a peace treaty is drawn up



↑ **Source 2.23** (Left) These returned soldiers in Sydney were among the many excited servicemen who ran wildly through the streets of the city, cheering and waving flags. People in the street gave them thunderous applause. There was also a procession of 6000 soldiers in The Domain, which was wildly cheered by a large crowd. (Right) Women and girls, too, were unrestrained in expressing their relief and joy. City streets were packed with people, all making an uproar: some shouted, some sang, some blew whistles or beat on tin cans as drums.

For many returning soldiers, and for their loved ones, their arrival was often saddened by the sight of men who had returned ill, wounded or maimed. The Australian folk singer Eric Bogle has powerfully captured the feelings of men who returned to Australia with serious injuries, including missing arms and legs.

And those that were left, well we tried to survive  
In that mad world of blood, death and fire  
And for ten weary weeks, I kept myself alive  
Though around me the corpses piled higher  
Then a big Turkish shell knocked me arse over head  
And when I woke up in me hospital bed  
And saw what it had done, well I wished I was dead  
Never knew there was worse things than dyin'

Eric Bogle, *The Band Played Waltzing Matilda*, 1971.

### Source 2.24

You can view Eric Bogle singing 'The Band Played Waltzing Matilda' on YouTube, <https://cambridge.edu.au/redirect/9687>

## Indigenous homecomings

For Indigenous Australians, too, homecomings were emotional events. Families were anxious for the safe return of loved ones. At Point McLeay, the community was organised to welcome returning Indigenous soldiers, who were praised as ‘these sons of Australia’. In 1919 at the Euraba Mission in New South Wales, the people put on a full tribal feast with traditional music to celebrate the safe return of two of their number – Charlie Bird and George Bennett.<sup>18</sup>

## Transition to civilian life

The return to Australia was not the end of the story: the government, and the nation, had to spend massive sums to organise the soldiers’ return to civilian life and employment. The returned soldiers were helped, economically, by returning to a booming economy: of the 170 000 repatriated soldiers, only 13 000 failed to find work.<sup>19</sup> Socially, the return to civilian life was often painful. Returned soldiers came back to a changed society, and were especially outraged by the pacifist protests of left-wing groups. In Brisbane, radicals marched carrying red flags and demanding – justifiably – that the War Precautions Act should be terminated. Hundreds of returned soldiers attacked the march with bayonets and clubs, and injured 19 people. They rampaged, smashing shop windows. Some returned soldiers initially only felt comfortable in each other’s company. Many found comfort and comradeship in the Returned Soldiers’ League, although the drop in its membership in later years suggests that the need for its services gradually diminished.

→ **Source 2.25** To cover the costs of **repatriation**, the government launched a new loan appeal called Peace Bonds. People were asked to lend the government money not to fight the war, but to win the peace. This soldier has returned, apparently uninjured, but still in his uniform and carrying a souvenir German helmet. He manfully embraces his fond wife and holds his adoring son in his arms. For many other men, the return would not be quite so easy.

**repatriation** the process of bringing troops who have been fighting in foreign lands back to their own country





↑ **Source 2.26** Once the celebrations and cheering stopped, Australians were left to the silence and grief of bereavement. Here, Alice Hucker of Mackay stands sadly by the war memorial, remembering her only son, who was killed in 1917. She and her husband attended every Anzac Day ceremony in his memory.

At the close of hostilities, some 60 000 Australians had given their lives in the conflict; another 150 000 were wounded. This represented one-tenth of men of military service age. On the home front, one in every six people experienced **bereavement**.<sup>20</sup> Prime Minister Billy Hughes said in Parliament in 1919 that ‘they died for the safety of Australia’ and in doing so ‘had made for themselves a name that will not die’.<sup>21</sup> Australia had been at war before, but never with such a staggering impact on the home population.

**bereavement** grief and loss felt after the death of a loved one

**Anzac** the acronym for the Australian and New Zealand Army Corps, formed in Egypt in December 1914

## Soldier repatriation and soldier settlement

Despite public admiration for the **Anzac** legend, this did not extend to individual soldiers. Many soldiers found, upon returning, that their former employers were unwelcoming and hesitant to employ them. Some returned soldiers had physical injuries, some had psychological trauma, and some simply had a new spirit with daring and adventure, and a disregard for authority. Employers now had better-trained staff with up-to-date skills, and did not want to lose them.

The Federal Government’s Repatriation Department embarked upon a scheme called Soldier Settlement. A Royal Commission would later rule that this was, generally, a disastrous failure, primarily because it involved leasing parcels of land to a returned soldier for farming purposes. For young men who were now impatient with the dreary jobs of city life, this seemed a golden opportunity to become independent farmers. It was no such thing. The grants of land were often too small to be viable farms, or they consisted of poor land producing little. The returned soldiers were given little training in farming methods, and they lacked the finances to establish a workable farm. Admittedly, some returned soldiers did still manage to make their farms work profitably, but they were not the majority. Men who had survived the horrors of the trenches, and who were arguably heroes, now faced failure, bankruptcy and hopelessness. For historian Michael McKernan, ‘the hapless settlers lost much more, money, but more important, hope and meaning for their lives’.<sup>22</sup> Men who had not been broken by German bombs during the war were now broken by official mismanagement.

For Indigenous Australians, the situation was worse. Few succeeded in their application for a land grant. One official wrote about Robert Beulah’s application: ‘This case is unsatisfactory [...]

the holder is a black man [...] altogether the wrong sort of man.<sup>23</sup> The anger over this kind of discriminatory and racist behaviour was one of the main inspirations for the Aboriginal activism that emerged later in the twentieth century.

## Political and diplomatic change and continuity

In 1914, Australia had been so eager to serve Britain that it committed its men and ships before the British government had even asked for them.

The first Anzac Day in 1916 arguably helped to develop a sense of national Australian identity separate to Britain.

### Source 2.24

But generally speaking, it was assumed that Australia only lived by the grace of England...Anzac Day has changed all that. The Australian flag has been brought from the garret and has been hoisted on a lofty tower in the full sight of its own people. No matter how the war may end- and it can only end one way- we are at last a nation, with one heart, one soul and one thrilling aspiration.

Freemason's Journal, Sydney, 27 April, 1916.

### League of Nations

the 'international parliament' that was the ancestor of today's United Nations

After 1918, Australia demanded, and began to receive, the status of a fully independent nation. Australia had its own seat at the Paris Peace Conference (1919–1920), which drew up the Treaty of Versailles, and also had an independent place in the League of Nations. Hughes even stated at the Paris Peace Conference that he was representing the 66,000 dead Australian soldiers, rather than going behind a 'British Screen' (or speaking on behalf of Britain). It should be noted, however, that countries such as Australia were not given the authority to handle their own foreign affairs until 1931, when the Statute of Westminster offered this right; Australia, in any case, did not accept this until 1942. However, historians do contest the idea that Australia perceived itself as a fully independent nation by this time. Henry Reynolds argues that Australia's participation in WWI did not '[inaugurate] a new phase of national independence.' Instead, 'Gallipoli served to lock Australia more firmly into the Imperial embrace. Following World War I, British values, education, literature and even the British accent were re-invigorated in Australia.' On the other hand, historian Kate Laing contends: 'With its new independent status at the **League of Nations**, Australia came of age diplomatically. The war changed ideas about Australia's place in the world and the shift from imperial dependency to independent representation on new international bodies helped to shape the image of Australia as an autonomous state'.<sup>24</sup>

## 2.7 Chapter summary

Here are some dot-points for you to consider and add to:

### Continuity

- Conscription remained only for service within Australia.
- Women's employment was wound back to pre-war levels as the soldiers started to return home.
- After 1918, unemployment increased again.
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people continued to be denied Australian citizenship.

## Change

- By the start of the Twentieth century, Australia had developed a reputation as a ‘working man’s paradise’, but war would shatter that image.
- The Australian Government emerged with significantly greater powers than before.
- The Australian Government took on the task of resettling returned soldiers and caring for the injured.
- Australian citizens had experienced serious division and dispute over the matter of conscription.
- A greater number of women had experienced entering the paid workforce and earning an independent wage.
- The trade unions movement and labour rights had both been challenged and reduced during the war emergency.
- There was more employment during the war.
- Australia’s traditional loyalty to Britain was now tarnished to some degree by bitterness over bad leadership and disastrous defeats while under British command, notably at Gallipoli. Nonetheless, in official and governmental circles, Australia’s relationship with the British Empire remained as close as, or even closer than, before World War I. This was especially so in its defence policies, its economic and trade policies and its immigration policies.
- The trade unions and their working-class members felt that they had been required to make the greatest sacrifices, compared with industrialists who profited from the war.
- Australia’s national identity was enhanced by the pride in the Anzac spirit and in fighting bravely beside the British.
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders experienced increased opportunities for paid employment and won respect in these roles.

## 2.8 End-of-chapter activities

### Consolidating your understanding

#### Events

Answer the following questions to help consolidate your understanding of the events in this chapter.

1. Why did the crisis of World War I have an impact on the labour rights of working people, leading them to take strike action to defend and improve their conditions?
2. What challenges did Australian women face when they attempted to enter the workforce and the armed forces in order to support the war effort?
3. Why do historians now criticise the government’s policy of interning ‘enemy aliens’?
4. Why did Indigenous people support the war effort?
5. Why did the debate on conscription divide the Australian nation so bitterly?
6. What were the real purposes of propaganda on the home front in Australia during World War I?

### Analysing causes and consequences

1. How did World War I affect the lives of ordinary people on the Australian home front?
2. Examine the impacts of World War I on Australia’s sense of itself as a nation.

### Constructing an argument: essay writing

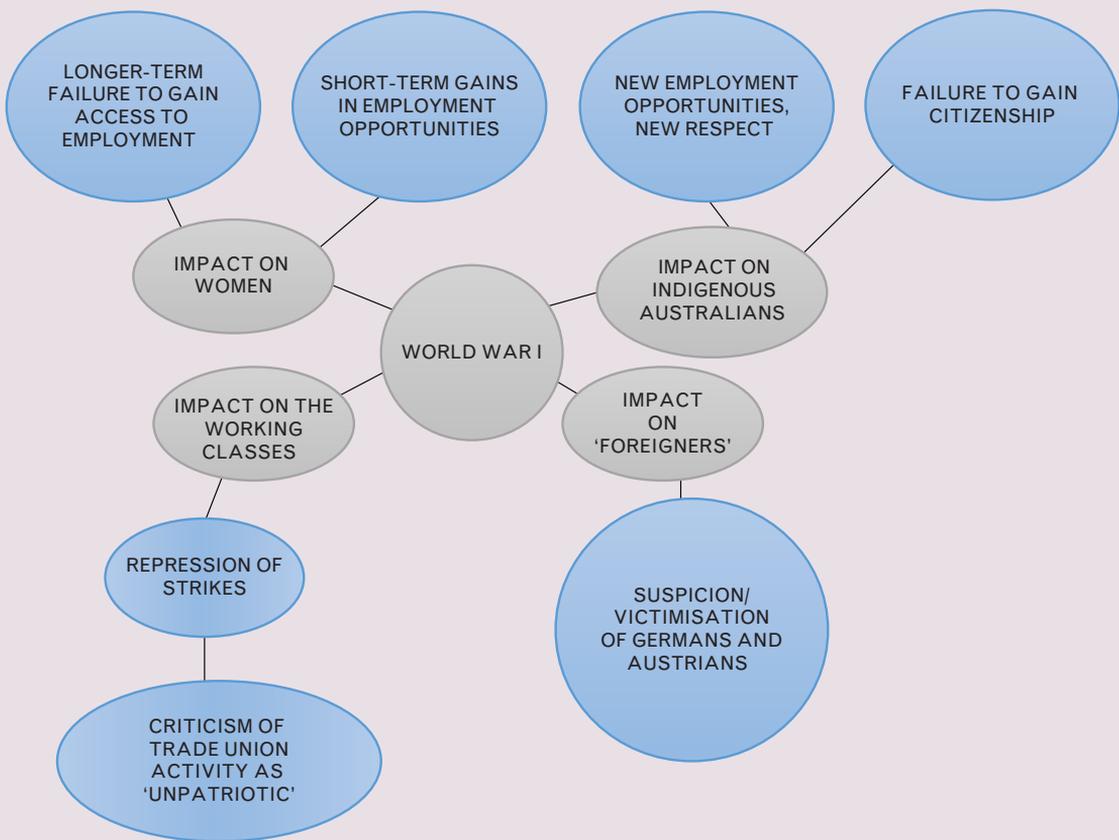
‘In the short term, the crisis of World War I created some new opportunities for participation for groups such as Indigenous people and Australian women, but failed to deliver long-term benefits.’

To what extent do you agree with this argument? In your response, provide evidence and examples to substantiate your argument.

### Evaluating the historical significance of World War I in changing Australia society

Add further details to the following mind map outlining the impacts of the war effort on Australian society during World War I.

1. Rank the impacts of the war emergency on different social groups on the home front.
2. On balance, how did World War I benefit/affect Australian women?
3. How did World War I benefit/affect working people?
4. How did World War I benefit/affect Indigenous Australians?
5. How did World War I benefit/affect people of foreign origin?
6. Debrief as a class. Having listened to your classmates' arguments and rankings, would you change yours? If so, which ones and why?



## Evaluating the historical significance of ideas and events

To prepare yourself for the examination, fill out the grid below.

Date	Event	What happened?	What was its significance to Australia?
5 August 1914	Declaration of War	Britain declares war on Germany	Australia's support of Britain draws it into a prolonged and massively destructive war
29 October 1914	War Precautions Act		
8 July 1915	Internationalism/ Women's Peace Army		
September 1917	End of the great Strike of 100 000 workers		
October 1917	Aboriginal people allowed to enlist in the armed forces		
28 June 1919	Australia joins the League of Nations		

### Extension reading

Joan Beaumont and Allison Cadzow, *Serving Our Country: Indigenous Australians, War, Defence and Citizenship*. Sydney: NewSouth, 2018.

Department of Veterans' Affairs, *Australian Women in War: Investigating the Experiences and Changing Roles of Women in War and Peace Operations, 1899–Today*. Melbourne: Department of Veterans' Affairs, 2008. Retrieved from <https://cambridge.edu.au/redirect/9688>.

This is another excellent teaching resource from the department of Veterans' Affairs, offering detailed chapters on each of the conflicts in which Australian women have been involved. These include sub-sections specifically about the way the war changed women's lives.

Martin Crotty, 'The Veteran Challenge: Repatriation Benefits for Australian Soldiers' in *The Great War: Aftermath and Commemoration*, eds. C Holbrook & K. Reeves, NewSouth, 2019.

On the topic of the repatriation of soldiers, this book reveals that compared to other countries who participated in the war, the Australian government was generous with benefits for returning soldiers.

Marina Larsson, *Shattered Anzacs: Living with the Scars of War*, 2009.

This is another excellent text on the topic of repatriation.

# CHAPTER 3

## Challenges to Australia's political, social and economic cohesion, 1939–1950



*Spare time . . .*  
FOR AUSTRALIA'S DEFENCE  
*in the*  
CITIZEN ARMY

**Source 3.0** Australian Government poster aimed at recruiting men into the Army, circa 1950. The poster shows how a focus on national defence was maintained after World War II.

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## Chapter timeline

World events	Date	Australian events
<b>1937:</b> Tensions in Europe, and the aggressive policies of Hitler, create fears of war	<b>1937</b>	<b>1937:</b> Expecting international war, Australia begins the process of building up its armed forces
<b>3 September 1939:</b> Britain declares war on Germany after Nazi Germany's invasion of Poland	<b>1939</b>	<b>3 September 1939:</b> Prime Minister Menzies announces to the nation that Australia has declared war on Germany <b>October 1939:</b> Announcement of a 2nd AIF
<b>May–June 1940:</b> Fall of France - this led to a surge of enlistments for the 2nd AIF	<b>1940</b>	<b>January 1940:</b> The first Australian troops depart for service with the British in the Middle East
<b>June 1940:</b> Italy joins the war - This led to the interment/ poor treatment of Australian/Italians		
<b>July–October 1940:</b> Britain holds off Hitler's invasion by its defence in the Battle of Britain		<b>July 1940:</b> Formation of the Volunteer Defence Corps
<b>27 September 1940:</b> Germany and Italy sign the Tripartite Pact with Japan	<b>1940</b>	<b>July 1940:</b> Petrol rationing
<b>22 June 1941:</b> The Nazi invasion of Soviet Russia opens up a new front in the war		
<b>7 December 1941:</b> Japanese attack on US naval base at Pearl Harbor	<b>1941</b>	<b>7 October 1941:</b> Labor politician John Curtin becomes Prime Minister
<b>7–15 February 1942:</b> The Battle of Singapore, ending in its capture by the Japanese	<b>1942</b>	<b>19 February 1942:</b> Bombing of Darwin and other cities by Japanese planes
United States establishes the South-West Pacific Area, and uses Australia as a base for its troops	<b>1942</b>	<b>18 April 1942:</b> Australia's armed forces are placed under the command of General Douglas MacArthur
<b>4–7 June 1942:</b> The Battle of Midway halts Japan's advance into the Pacific region	<b>1942</b>	<b>31 May–8 June 1942:</b> Japanese mini-submarines attack Sydney
	<b>1942</b>	<b>1942–43:</b> Australia suffers a total of 97 Japanese raids
<b>23 August 1942:</b> Russia's fierce resistance to Nazi Germany's invading forces last to 2 February 1943, and result in a devastating defeat for Hitler's army, halting its advance into Eastern Europe and Russia	<b>1942</b>	
<b>10 July 1943:</b> Allied forces land at German occupied Sicily, and begin the invasion of Hitler's 'Fortress Europe	<b>1943</b>	

World events	Date	Australian events
<p><b>7–9 May 1945:</b> Germany surrenders to the Allies</p> <p><b>6 and 9 August 1945:</b> Atomic bombs are dropped on Hiroshima and Nagasaki, leading to Japan's surrender</p>	<p><b>1945</b></p> 	<p><b>13 July 1945:</b> Following John Curtin's death Ben Chifley is elected leader of the Australian Labor Party, and becomes Prime Minister of Australia</p>

## 3.1 Introduction: Another war that changed Australia

### INQUIRY QUESTION

In what ways did the experience of World War II change Australian society, specifically for groups such as citizens of foreign origin, people of Indigenous origin, and women and children?

World War II was another war that changed Australia. On 15 August 1945 in Brisbane, Sister Julia O'Sullivan, an Australian woman, looked out upon the cheering crowd celebrating Victory in the Pacific. For her, this was not just an Allied military victory but also a massive change to our way of life in Australia, especially for women.

#### Source 3.1

People in the street were singing, dancing and hugging one another with sheer joy. Peace at last! Life had changed forever. The question was, what now? *We were no longer the young women joining the Army. We had been trusted to take responsibility. We had grown up.* We had survived, made good friends with people from all over Australia, and had observed the rise and fall of humanity! So many men and women would return home. So many would not. We would learn of **atrocities** committed in the prisoner of war camps, we knew for sure that many of our friends did not survive ... Now that life had changed, what would peace bring?

Cited in Department of Veterans' Affairs, *Australia's Home Defence, 1939–1945: Australians in the Pacific War*, Canberra: Department of Veterans' Affairs, 2006, p. 141.

**atrocities** any act involving high levels of violence, extreme cruelty and severe injury or extensive loss of life

### The other battleground: The home front

**national consciousness** any event that is well-known to the majority of a nation's population

**pilgrimage** a journey usually undertaken for religious and spiritual reasons

Most Australians know something of Australia's involvement in the military struggles of World War II that happened beyond the nation's borders. Some events, such as the Battle for Kokoda, have entered into our **national consciousness** and imagination. Walking the Kokoda Trail in Papua New Guinea now almost has the significance of a religious **pilgrimage**: a tribute to the men who fought a desperate battle in horrendous conditions to turn back Japanese forces who were vastly superior in numbers and training.

Fewer Australians know enough of the events on the home front or understand how our war experience caused profound changes in Australian society. We now live in an advanced, multicultural society, with access to the whole world via computer

technology. It is difficult to imagine a much smaller, more traditional society, distant from the great centres of global civilisation, and informed only by radio and newspapers. In 1939, most Australians had only seen an American in black-and-white Hollywood movies and in cinema newsreels. While the government's military, economic and immigration policies remained focused on Britain, many ordinary Australians still identified as British and called travelling to England 'going home'.

When Hitler's Armies invaded Poland and war broke out in Europe, the conflict seemed a distant event, but one in which Australia again would loyally support Britain. All this changed after Japan entered the war on Germany's side with its attack on the US naval base at Pearl Harbor in December 1941. War engulfed the Pacific region. Australia became the centre of a new theatre (zone) of war. The devastating Japanese attacks on Darwin, Broome and Townsville in early 1942 proved that war could come directly to Australia. At the time, Australians felt real alarm.

Australians today might be less aware that, on the home front at least, this would also be 'the war that changed us' and also challenged Australia. On the battlefield, war is terribly destructive. On the home front, however, war can cause political, social and economic changes that catapult a society into more modern ways of organising society and living private lives. In this chapter, we will examine these changes on the home front of World War II that unleashed forces that helped forge modern Australia.

### Public response to the declaration of war

"Fellow Australians, it is my melancholy duty to inform you officially that, in consequence of the persistence of Germany in her invasion of Poland, Great Britain has declared war upon her, and that, as a result, Australia is also at war." On 3 September 1939, by radio broadcast, Prime Minister Menzies had committed Australia to another world war. In contrast to 1914, reactions to the outbreak of war in September 1939 were comparatively subdued. Historian Kate Darian-Smith notes: 'There was [...] a



↑ **Source 3.2** As a troopship sails in Port Phillip Bay in December 1939, a small group of women wave farewell from the wharf

general sense of foreboding [dread] amongst civilians. Despite Australia's geographical isolation, recent technological advances gave warning of bombardment from the sky'.<sup>1</sup>

The Australian Government immediately declared its support for Britain. However, Menzies was criticised for a lack of action, and even announced to the nation days after the declaration of war that it was 'business as usual'. Announcements about troop support were delayed for two months, and soldiers did not depart for the Middle East until January 1940. Initially, there were no demonstrations of patriotic loyalty and no great move to enlist. Many who joined were called 'economic recruits', unemployed men who just wanted an income. Most people, however, remembered the **carnage** and loss of life of World War I, and they were also embittered by the poverty and suffering of the Great Depression. They were not, however, indifferent: large crowds in Melbourne farewelled Victoria's departing AIF troops in January 1940.

**carnage** extreme destruction

## 3.2 War comes to Australia

### INQUIRY QUESTION

How did the greater proximity of World War II to Australia affect the way the nation responded to the emergency?

### Australia's fear of Japan's power

Traditionally, Australians feared Japan's growing military power. As early as 1904–05, 'little' Japan's victory over the mighty Russian Empire caused fears that Japan would also attack Australia. In 1920, Australia's senior commanders warned that Australia was the likely target for the growing ambitions of a heavily militarised Japan. In the 1920s, Britain tried to curb Japan's military growth by negotiating a limit on its armaments and by developing Singapore as a major naval base to protect the Pacific region.

### Australia's failure to build up its armed forces

From 1920 to 1937, Australia spent little on defence. It was only in 1937 – when a second global conflict appeared imminent – that the government increased spending, but by then it was too late. The Australian Army, Navy and Air Force were too small and lacking in equipment to defend Australia. In 1939, Australia was seriously underprepared in terms of troops and equipment. When the Pacific War erupted in December 1941, Australia only had 73 per cent of the rifles needed, 50 per cent of guns (anti-tank and anti-aircraft) necessary and 31 per cent of hand grenades needed. There were few tanks and less than 50 per cent of the trucks required. Overall, the average of the readiness of Australian forces for war was 40 per cent.<sup>2</sup> This had serious implications for the home front as well. All wars demand increased production with a reduced workforce, but this one would require Australia to make a massive effort to produce food, uniforms and weapons. For this reason, the story of our home front is far more than providing comfort packages for the troops: it involved mobilising an entire nation to respond to an overwhelming challenge for which it was unready.

In 1939–40, available Australian troops were sent to assist British forces in the Middle East. Japan had not yet entered the war, but even so Australia sent ships and troops to Malaya, Indonesia, the Netherlands, East Indies and Papua New Guinea as a defence precaution. It was clear that Australian forces alone could not defend the Pacific region: they needed massive reinforcements from a more powerful ally, Britain or the United States. The seriousness of Australia's weak position became clear when Japan entered the war in December 1941, sparking war in the Pacific region. The nation faced a militarily superior enemy, seriously unprepared.

**impregnable** said to be so strong that it could never be captured

More traumatic was the arrival of the unthinkable news in early 1942 that the Japanese had captured the British stronghold of Singapore, including thousands of Australians. Since this fortress was believed to be **impregnable**, the Fall left Australians feeling that Britain could not protect Australia.

In contrast to World War I, World War II involved a serious physical threat to Australia. At the outbreak of war in 1939, Australians wanted to assist Britain, but there was still no precedent to make them fear that they themselves would be attacked. Australia never suffered the extensive devastation suffered by Britain, France or Germany, but unlike World War I, Australia's home front became a part of the war front. Australia suffered a total of 97 Japanese raids in 1942–43, of which the devastating bombing of Darwin is now, finally, the best known.

## Changing loyalties and strategic allegiances

The direct threat to Australia had another serious implication: now that our troops were required for national defence, Australia could not send troops to assist Britain. Britain also stated that it could not afford to send troops to help Australia. The ‘**Telegram War**’ between Australian Prime Minister John Curtin and British Prime Minister Winston Churchill in 1942 reveals the tensions caused by this issue. Curtin argued that Australian troops serving abroad must be sent home, while Churchill argued that he needed Australian troops to help defend Burma from the Japanese. The same year, Curtin signed the Statute of Westminster (1931), which empowered Australia to make independent foreign policy decisions. Knowing that the United States wanted Australia as a base from which to repel Japanese advances in the Pacific, Curtin hastened to enlist its military power for the defence of Australia. This did not involve a complete rejection of Britain: even after the strategic ANZUS treaty with America (1951), Australia would still co-operate with Britain, for example by allowing it to detonate atomic test bombs on Australian soil.

**telegram** an electric message sent down a wire and broken into coded impulses by a circuit breaking device. It was able to travel long distances overland through transmission wires or undersea cables.



↑ **Source 3.3** Map showing the Second World War’s Pacific theatre of operations, 1941–1945. The dark line marks the high tide of Japanese expansion across the Pacific in July 1942. ‘Map of the Pacific theatre, 1941–1945’, URL: <https://nzhistory.govt.nz/media/photo/japanese-expansion-in-ww2>, (Ministry for Culture and Heritage), updated 20-Dec-2012

### DID YOU KNOW?

Menzies had the Communist Party banned in June 1940. This was lifted by Curtin in 1942, once Russia became an ally.

### RESEARCH TASK 3.1

Learn about Australia’s wartime prime ministers: Robert Menzies, John Curtin, who argued that Australian troops must defend Australia first, not Britain’s Empire; and Ben Chifley who completed Australia’s wartime effort and planning for peace. Visit the Australian Dictionary of Biography website and search for these individuals at <https://cambridge.edu.au/redirect/9686>.

## Prime Minister Robert Menzies and the initial war effort and Prime Minister John Curtin's emergency measures

Robert Menzies, as prime minister, led Australia in the first period of the war by sending troops to the Middle East. After October 1941 the Menzies government did lay down a lot of the groundwork for Labor. The cohesion on the Australian home front may in fact be attributed to the cooperation between the Menzies and Curtin governments, especially after the War Advisory Council was established in October 1940, which gave shared access to wartime information between the government and opposition leader. John Curtin, the Labor leader, became prime minister in October 1941. Historian of Australia's home front Kate Darian-Smith wrote that John Curtin's Government 'had the task of leading the nation through the greatest crisis of its history'.<sup>3</sup>

### DID YOU KNOW?

John Curtin's declaration of war on Japan in December 1941 was made independent of Britain.

The Australian Federal Parliament passed the National Security Regulations imposing strict controls on the nation's economy and social life. Under the Menzies government, the Australian Federal Parliament had passed the National Security Regulations at a very early stage of the war (9 September 1939), empowering Australia to make exceptional measures for its own defence. During the parliamentary debates, John Curtin's opposition Labor Government did not vote in favour of it. Menzies assured the government that the legislation would only be used in dire situations, while Curtin argued that the nature of the legislation undermined the democratic nature of Australian society. However, with the declaration of war against Japan (9 December 1941) and the subsequent potential threat of Japanese invasion, the (then) Curtin government considerably

increased emergency measures, primarily by regulating economic production and the private lives of citizens. Curtin swiftly introduced rationing of food and clothing, limiting how much of an item a person could buy in a year. Curtin also created the Manpower Directorate, so that the government assumed complete control of available labour, with priority given to the war industries. So powerful was this sudden governmental control that even people's private lives, social activities and conversations were subjected to new restrictions. People were urged to accept old clothing, to make a virtue of cheerfully going without some things, and to be careful not to disclose information that might help the enemy.

As early as June 1941, federal legislation established the Department of Home Security to increase the number of personnel and to regularise the different systems of defence devised by the various states.

### RESEARCH TASK 3.2

Look up John Curtin's speech, 'The Task Ahead', from 27th December, 1941. Extract some quotes that you believe to be significant for your notes.

## Voluntary Civil Defence

The Voluntary Civil Defence force involved the extensive use of unpaid civilian volunteers to defend communities from enemy attack. In Victoria, 2500 men and 200 women volunteered. Another 60 000 people volunteered to assist with air-raid precautions.<sup>4</sup> This may be explained by the fact that Melbourne, with its significant ammunition factory at Maribyrnong, was a target

for Japanese bombing. Across the nation, Australians were vividly aware of what such a bombing might entail, because they had seen – when visiting the cinema – frightening newsreel footage showing the bombing of London during **the Blitz**.

The main home front defence unit in Australia was the Citizen Military Force, which by mid-1941 expanded by call-up to 173 000 men in four infantry divisions and two cavalry divisions. Only 45 000 of them were on duty. Most had basic, even inadequate, military training. There was also the Permanent Military Force of some 5000 men. Australia also had a ‘Dad’s Army’ of some 13 000 veterans from World War I, responsible for defending coastal military fortifications from sabotage.

The Returned Soldiers and Sailors’ Imperial League of Australia (RSSILA), later known as the Returned Services League (RSL), formed a Volunteer Defence Corps consisting of 44 000 men exempted from military service but who wanted to help. Formed in July 1940, it was taken over by the Australian Army in May 1941. These figures seem impressive, but had Japan desired and been able to invade Australia at the very start of the war, these units would not have been strong enough to resist the invasion. The only hope was that, once Japan entered the war in December 1941, it would take them some time to capture Malaya and the Dutch East Indies, giving Australia time to prepare.

**the Blitz** Germany’s devastating campaign of bombing London and other British cities for nine months from September 1941, using high-powered explosives and firemaking bombs, reducing these cities to rubble

## The Fall of Singapore opens the Battle for Australia

As it turns out, Australia had no time to prepare: between December 1941 and March 1942, Japan advanced with numbing aggression. The Japanese captured the town and the strategically important harbour of Rabaul in Papua New Guinea on 23 January 1942, and then the island of Ambon on 3 February 1942. From this moment on, Australia was within range of Japanese bombers flying from Ambon. Soon after, Japan’s capture of Singapore on 15 February 1942 stripped Australia of the last illusion that it was ‘protected’. Prime Minister Curtin grimly said: ‘The Fall of Singapore opens the Battle for Australia’.

### RESEARCH TASK 3.3

1. Investigate what the purpose and nature of the British defences at Singapore were.
2. Analyse why and how the Japanese were able to capture such a heavily fortified defence.
3. Evaluate the impact of the capture of Singapore, both on official strategic thinking of the Australian Government, and on the morale of the Australian people.

## The bombing of Darwin: ‘Like smashing an egg with a sledgehammer’

The most devastating attack on Australia was long kept the most secret. The story of the Japanese attack on Darwin on 19 February 1942 is one of serious unpreparedness.

It is best summed up by the commander of the Japanese forces, Admiral Yamamoto himself, who expressed utter amazement about how unprepared Darwin was. He said that the attack was so easy: ‘it was like smashing an egg with a sledgehammer’.<sup>5</sup> The Japanese were so confident of their firepower that they flew over their targets to take aerial photographs to plan their attack.

In February 1942, 2000 civilians were evacuated from Darwin, leaving the same number of people in the city. Darwin had its own garrison of soldiers, and other AIF units supplemented it. Three American military units of 3000 troops later arrived. The Royal Australian Air Force had squadrons of Hudson bombers and Wirraway fighter planes. These were no match for the overwhelming Japanese force of four aircraft carriers, launching 188 fighter planes, backed by 54 bombers from the island of Ambon.



↑ **Source 3.4** This aerial reconnaissance photograph is one of a number taken by Japanese pilots in preparation for their attack on Darwin.

Darwin was unprepared for this attack. Advance observers saw the Japanese planes approaching and sent the alarm at 9.37 am, but Darwin authorities did not sound the alarm until 10 am. By then it was too late. The first bombs were falling. The aircraft defences opened fire but discovered that their guns were not powerful enough to reach the Japanese planes, which were flying higher. Captain Dudley Vose recalled the frustration of the gunners:

### Source 3.5

#### DID YOU KNOW?

The same squadron of Japanese planes that attacked Pearl Harbor were also responsible for the attack on Darwin.

I looked up and saw things dropping from the sky, glinting from the sun as they fell. I actually saw the bombs before I saw the planes. My men were at their posts and in action before the air-raid sirens sounded. We fired about 800 [bullets] from the [...] guns on the first day, but we were well below the target most of the time. Our equipment really wasn't up to it. We weren't ready for the fact the Japs were flying very high'.

Department of Veterans' Affairs, *Australia's Home Front 1939–1945: Australians in the Pacific War*, Canberra: Department of Veterans' Affairs, 2006, p. 9.

The Japanese lost 10 aircraft, but 10 Allied ships were sunk in the harbour, 14 were damaged, and 24 planes were ruined, including all but one of the valuable American Kittyhawk fighter planes. Some 243 people – including civilians and Australian and American servicemen – died.

## Did the Australian Government try to cover up the seriousness of the attack on Darwin?

It is common to suggest that the Australian Government minimised the seriousness of the raid, giving minimal figures of either nine or 17 people's deaths. Peter Grose, author of *The Bombing of Darwin: An Awkward Truth*, asserts that the Japanese dropped more bombs on Darwin than they did in their attack on Pearl Harbor, and also killed more people and sank more ships. Prime Minister Curtin did admit publicly that the attack had been a serious and devastating one. It is also true that the Charles Lowe Commission, which investigated the reasons for the disaster, did reveal the truth about the attack, but it was not published until February 1945.

## Darwin: Collage of a disaster



← **Source 3.6** The ship *Neptuna*, as well as Darwin's oil tanks, are set alight by Japanese bombs. The HMAS *Deloraine*, seen in the foreground, survived the attack.



← **Source 3.7** Two soldiers stand in the deep crater in the main street of Darwin, created by a Japanese bomb



← **Source 3.8** This photograph shows the ruins of the Darwin Post Office, where 10 civilians died. Nine people were killed as they sheltered in a trench nearby.

→ **Source 3.9** Australian soldiers, probably from Darwin, are treated in a hospital in Berrimah, Northern Territory. The true number of the casualties (killed and wounded) was kept a close secret during the war and for decades afterwards. At least 243 people were killed.



### **‘War has ceased merely to be on Australia’s doorstep. It is on the door mat reaching for the knocker’**

After the bombing of Darwin and Broome, on 11 March 1942, the journalist ‘Ek Dum’ of *The Bulletin* made the alarming prediction that a Japanese invasion had begun. Australian authorities urgently debated Japan’s intentions.<sup>6</sup> They did not know that the Japanese authorities were divided: the Navy recommended invasion, hoping for further glory for its forces at sea. The Army was realistic. It recognised that Australia was a vast, semi-arid land, and that Australians would resist strongly: both factors might destroy an invading Army. The Japanese compromise was to cut Australia off from the United States by capturing Papua New Guinea, Fiji, New Caledonia and Samoa.<sup>7</sup>

### **‘Make Australia secure’**

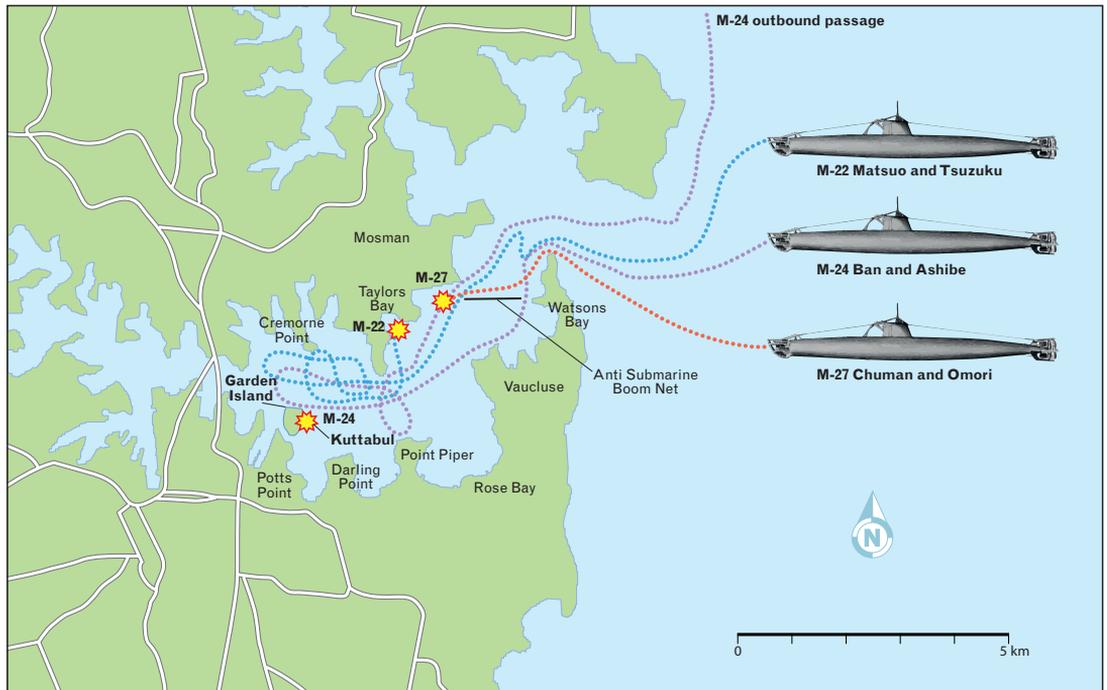
During March–April 1942, the Australian home front became the headquarters of a broader military zone, the South-West Pacific Area. While General Thomas Blamey remained commander of the Allied military forces, he was commanded by the US General Douglas MacArthur. Australia, due to its relative military weakness and unpreparedness, was understandably prepared to allow MacArthur to use Australia as a base and to hand over supreme command to him. His superiors suggested that he appoint Australian officers to his staff, but MacArthur did not.



↑ **Source 3.10** US General Douglas MacArthur (left) takes control of Australia’s military effort, as part of a broader strategy for the South-West Pacific Area, March 1942. Australia had effectively surrendered its control over its own military forces. The officer at right is Vernon Sturdee, Chief of the Australian General Staff.

## Japanese naval raids on the East coast

On 30 May 1942, one Japanese submarine launched a spy plane, which flew over Sydney Harbour, noting the location of major battleships, the USS *Chicago* and the HMAS *Canberra*. The plane was seen, but people assumed it was an Allied plane doing a training flight. On the night of 31 May, three Japanese ‘mother’ submarines – the I 27, I 22 and I 24 – launched three mini-submarines which sneaked through the defences at the Heads of Sydney Harbour. They proceeded on their mission to torpedo and sink Allied shipping. Their attack was limited by the problem of navigating the harbour at night. The Japanese hoped to sink major battleships, but their main victim was the ferry *Kuttabul*, killing 21 sailors who were on board.



↑ **Source 3.11** The course taken by the Japanese mini-submarines in their attack on Sydney Harbour. Although they did serious damage, they did not sink the two major battleships anchored there.



← **Source 3.12** The Japanese mini-submarine, Number 21, is raised from Sydney Harbour, 1 June 1942. It still contained the bodies of two crew members. They were given an honourable funeral.

## DID YOU KNOW?

James Nelson, on the patrol boat *Lolita*, had an alarmingly close encounter with the Japanese mini-submarine Number 14 when it became entangled in the anti-submarine net. Nelson tried to blow it up using depth charges, which did not explode successfully in the shallow water. Nelson recalled, 'We could see the periscope angling on us as we were coming in. On the third run, when we were right [beside] him, he blew himself up, self-destructed, and we nearly went with him. We were blown over in the water and heeled over and covered with debris and everything and we got out of it.'<sup>8</sup>

### FOCUS QUESTIONS 3.1

1. What was the main purpose of the Japanese mini-submarine raid on Sydney Harbour?
2. What factors limited the success of this Japanese attack?
3. What impact would this attack have had on the morale of the Australian public?
4. How do we know that the mini-submarine attacks were also suicide missions?

The three submarines were destroyed by Allied fire or by their own officers. Four Japanese bodies were recovered and given a military funeral and cremation. Out of respect, the ceremony was reported by the ABC and sent by radio to Japanese military authorities. Some Australians thought they should not be so honoured for a 'cowardly' attack. Rear Admiral Muirhead-Gould defended his actions:

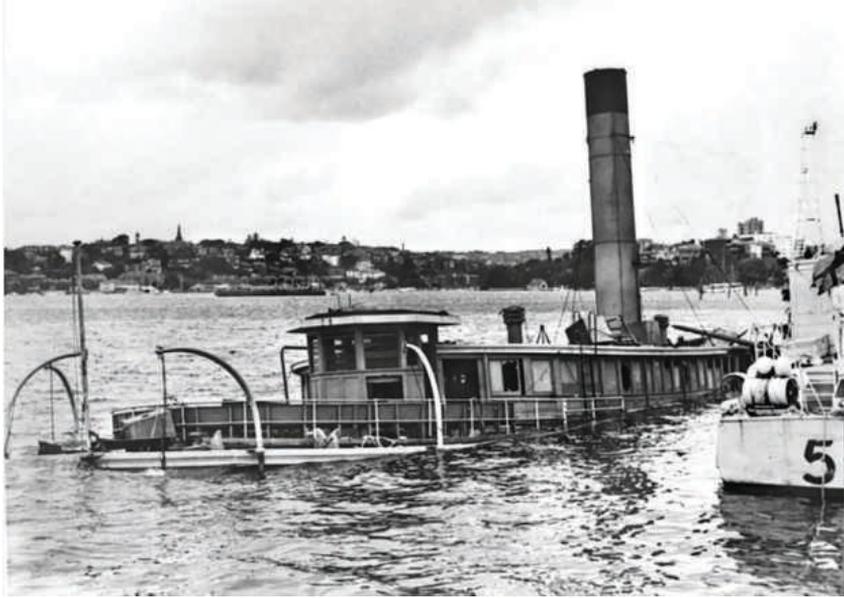
#### Source 3.13

I have been criticized for having accorded these men military honours as we hope may be accorded to our own comrades who have died in enemy hands, but I ask you – should we not accord full honours to brave men such as these? It must take courage of the very highest order to go out in a thing like this steel coffin'.

Australian War Memorial. (n. d.) Triumphant return in silence. *Wartime*, iss. 45.  
Canberra: Australian War Memorial, pp. 46–9.

### USING HISTORICAL SOURCES AS EVIDENCE 3.1

1. In terms of the nature of the attack and its results, why was Australian public opinion angered by the honours given to the Japanese sailors?
2. Why would Muirhead-Gould have called these vessels 'a thing like this steel coffin'?
3. What effect would this new form of attack have had on public emotions in Australia?



↑ **Source 3.14** The ferry *Kuttabul* was hit by a Japanese torpedo and sank, killing 19 Australian sailors and two British sailors. The bodies could not be retrieved for quite some time.

### Public responses to the victims of the attack

It took several months for the authorities to recover the bodies of the men killed in the attack at Sydney Harbour. When found, they were carried in solemn procession through Sydney. The government asked city workers along the route not to look at the bodies, horribly scarred by marine animals. Some ignored this warning and were horrified by what they saw. Not surprisingly, no photographs of the terrible procession were taken. Author Nancy Keesing, who witnessed the procession, recorded in this poem some intense impressions.

Corpses from the *Kuttabul*  
Japan torpedoed them  
To harbor weed, and mud  
That sucked them fast, and deep  
It seemed for good –  
For good and ever ... until  
From months of watery night  
A crane called Titan hauled them  
To summer light.  
Stinking, perished, fish-eaten  
On oozing stretchers  
Living sailors bore  
Remembered, cheeky wretches.  
'All blinds must be tight drawn'

**Source 3.15**

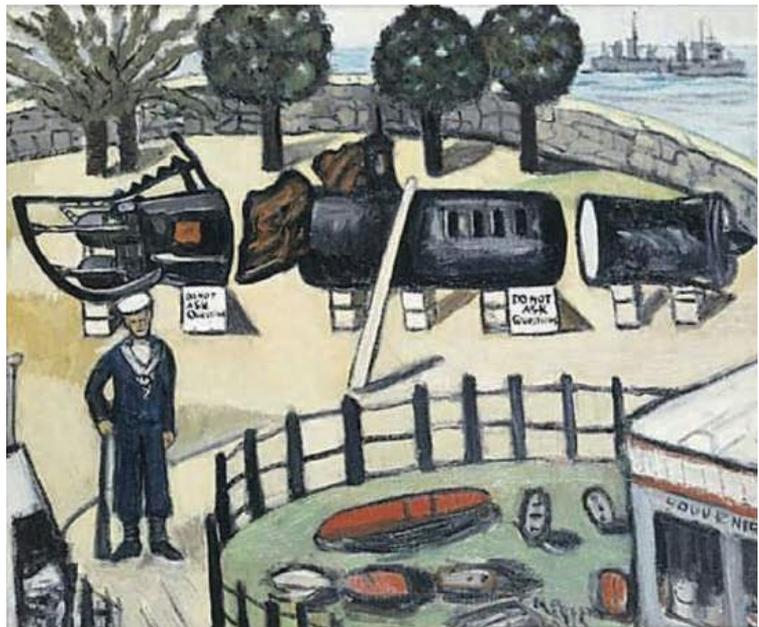
*Continued...*

... *Continued*

We, at our desks, were told.  
But that heat-stricken day  
Though ledgers felt clammy cold –  
No breathable air. We opened  
Our windows an inch or so  
And past the office wall  
We watched the stretchers go.  
Each had a canvas cover,  
Two sailors carrying.  
Our eyes half on figures and prices,  
Hearts wholly requiem.  
Drops spattered the path  
With corpse slime.  
It did not take long to move them.  
It seemed an endless time.  
Costings of ships for war  
Hazed down each blue-ruled page.  
I'd bundied on, young, at nine  
How quick the young can age.

Nancy Keesing, *The Home Front Family Album: Remembering Australia, 1939–1945*,  
Sydney: Weldon Publishing, 1991, pp. 9–10.

→ **Source 3.16** After the Japanese mini-submarines were destroyed, some wreckage was displayed in Sydney. Artist Margaret Preston painted this unusual scene as a comment upon the exhibition. Margaret Preston (Australia; England; France, b.1875, d.1963) Japanese submarine exhibition (1942) oil on canvas, 43.2 x 50.8 cm Art Gallery of New South Wales Gift of Mr W.G. Preston the artist's widower 1967 © Margaret Rose Preston Estate. Copyright Agency Photo: AGNSW OA30.1967



## USING HISTORICAL SOURCES AS EVIDENCE 3.2

1. Examine Source 3.16. Why might artist Margaret Preston have added the detail of the two signs saying 'Do not ask questions'?
2. Why might Preston and other Australians have been very critical that the mini-submarine attack occurred?

Japanese submarines also shelled Sydney and Newcastle. On 8 June 1942, a mini-submarine fired 10 shells into some eastern suburbs of Sydney like Rose Bay, Bellevue Hill and Woollahra. Only one **shell** exploded, and damage was limited to buildings: no lives were lost.

**shell** artillery fired from a cannon

Australian public opinion changed dramatically. Before these disasters, there had been a vigorous, open debate in conversations and the media as to whether the nation should support Britain, including some voices in opposition. Now, with Australia threatened, most people favoured defending their country.

### Fear of invasion and evacuation of children

Historian Ann Howard, author of *A Carefree War*, argues that one of the most widespread experiences of this war – especially for those living close to the coast – was the fear of Japanese invasion. There was a longstanding belief among Australians that Japan would invade the country. This pre-existing fear was intensified by Japan's entry into the Pacific region in December 1941.

From 1939 onwards, thousands of children were sent by their parents to live in communities further inland, away from the coast. This vast movement of people was 'the largest upheaval since



↑ **Source 3.17** *Barbed wire entanglements*, Douglas Watson, 1942. The painting shows barbed wire entanglements on a beach in Melbourne in 1942.

**Country Women's Association of Australia (CWA)** an organisation that seeks to improve the lives, opportunities and rights of women, especially those living in rural, remote or regional areas

**Brisbane Line** a rumoured plan for the Australian Army to defend Australia only as far north as Brisbane, Queensland, leaving the area above the line to be captured by the Japanese if they invaded

**censored** the action by which government officials can remove any information about the war that might assist the enemy or alarm the public

white settlement', (except for the goldrushes of the 1850s) and yet it had barely been studied until Howard began her research.<sup>9</sup> With their men absent, many women were now in charge of families and were making decisions. Hearing of the terrible slaughters of civilians by the Japanese in the Chinese city of Nanjing (commonly known as the Rape of Nanjing), mothers contacted country relatives, or the **Country Women's Association (CWA)**, to arrange lodging in a country area well away from the coast. This fear was intensified when actual Japanese attacks made the threat more credible. Nobody knew when or where the Japanese would attack, so people from Darwin to Hobart feared invasion. Rumours spread quickly. Many citizens believed a local beach could be an invasion point. Manly Beach in Sydney was heavily fortified with barbed wire and concrete blocks.

### The Brisbane Line

In Queensland, people were panicked by rumours that there was a defined 'line' above Brisbane that would not be defended from Japanese attack. The so-called **Brisbane Line** had been briefly mentioned in government documents, but the idea was not seriously pursued. The government was alarmed by the spread of this panic, and made vague, unconvincing promises that it had a master plan. It also increased  **censorship** to decrease public fear: the bombing of Darwin was under-reported. The Australian War Memorial explains:

#### Source 3.18

The 'Brisbane line' was an alleged plan to abandon Northern Australia in the event of a Japanese invasion. The allegation was made during an election campaign in October 1942 when Edward Ward, the Minister for Labour and National Services accused the previous government of planning this strategy.

The accusation was unsubstantiated by Ward and firmly denied by Menzies and all members of the previous government. Curtin's initial failure to dismiss the allegation and General Douglas MacArthur's mention of it at a press conference in March 1943 led to the controversy gaining much momentum. Ward made repeated charges against the Menzies-Fadden government throughout 1943 and backed up his assertions by referring to a missing document.

The allegations created much public controversy and led to a Royal Commission of Inquiry in June 1943. Mr Justice Lowe was appointed Royal Commissioner. The terms of the commission were to focus on whether any document concerning the so-called 'Brisbane Line' was missing from the official files and if so what was the nature of this document.

The Royal Commission found the documents to be complete and that no such plan had been official policy under the Menzies Government.

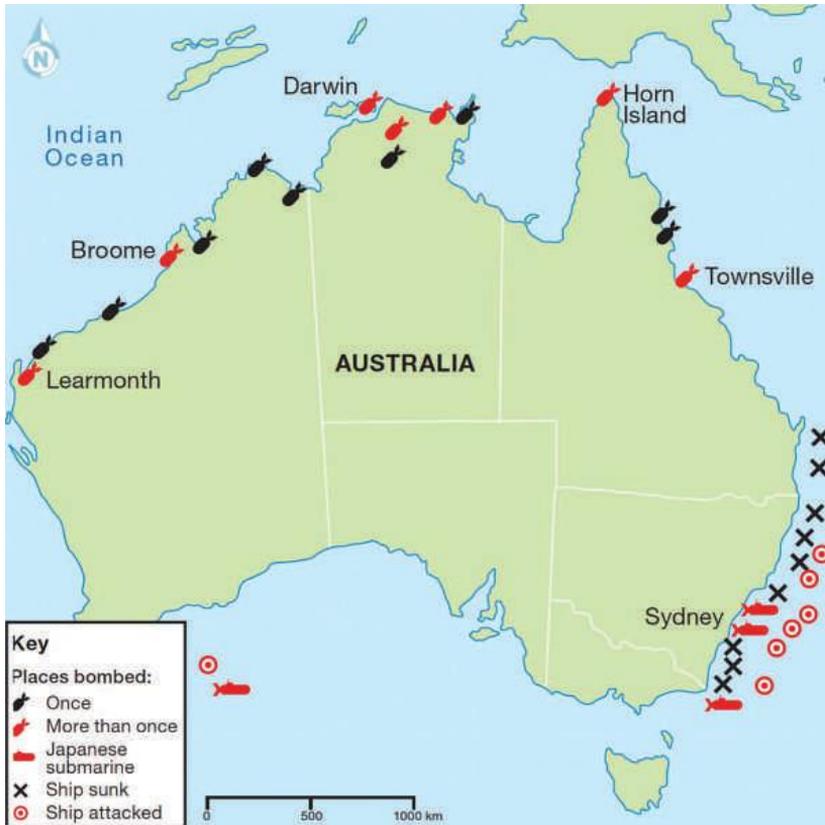
While Ward's allegations were unfounded the War Cabinet had put in place strategies prioritising defence for vital industrial areas in time of war. The plans were well known to members of parliament and while they were not connected to Ward's charges they did form part of his belief in the existence of a Brisbane Line. Ward's allegations were constructed from these ideas as well as evacuation policies and existing plans for a **scorched earth policy**.

**scorched earth policy**  
the act of an Army destroying everything in an area (such as food, buildings or equipment) that could be useful to an enemy

Australian War Memorial, 'Brisbane Line'



↑ **Source 3.19** A map showing Australian defensive concentrations in 1942 from General MacArthur's official report. The Brisbane Line is shown as a short black line to the north of Brisbane.



↑ **Source 3.20** The position of all recorded Japanese attacks on Australia

### USING HISTORICAL SOURCES AS EVIDENCE 3.3

1. Analyse the two maps in Sources 3.19 and 3.20. In terms of defence, which part of Australia did the United States prioritise? Was this justified?
2. Although Japanese attacks on the coast of New South Wales were limited, what impact would they have had on the Australian nation's morale?
3. How did many Australian families living in coastal areas cope with the fear of invasion by the Japanese?
4. Why do you think rumours of the Brisbane Line caused disproportionate public concern in Australia?

### The purposes of home front spirit

Historian Kate Darian-Smith has highlighted two important psychological aims of civilian defence.

First, it was critically important to maintain morale. While the news coming daily from the battlefield was often bad, governments assured civilians that the home front was defended and safe.

Second, the federal government took unprecedented control over people's lives, which would normally be resented and resisted in a modern democracy based on the idea of personal freedoms. Therefore, it was important to create a new mentality of patriotic obedience, of 'making do', 'going without' and sacrificing one's personal freedoms for 'the greater good'.

## Air-raid rehearsals, trenches and blackouts



↑ **Source 3.21** Men digging a defensive trench near the War Memorial in Melbourne, 1942



↑ **Source 3.22** These students at Sydney Church of England Grammar School are doing an air-raid rehearsal in a covered shelter, 1942.

Public fear of air raids was met with official action to dig trenches and air-raid shelters. The federal government provided significant funding for the construction of bomb shelters, and state governments funded the digging of trenches, usually in public gardens. In Melbourne, the grounds of the Shrine of Remembrance were pitted with zig-zag trenches; so too were the grounds of Melbourne University and schools such as Melbourne Grammar School and Ripponlea State School.

People dug shallow trenches in their backyards and covered them with sheets of corrugated iron. Those without gardens rehearsed huddling under the kitchen table when the air-raid sirens sounded. The official air-raid rehearsals were not always taken seriously. People either did not know where the air-raid shelters were or did not care to use them. One Melbourne woman refused instructions from an air-raid warden, defiantly saying that she had not finished drinking her coffee.<sup>10</sup>

### Living in the dark

Citizens were affected by precautions against the expected Japanese air raids. In some cities, public lighting was lowered to create a murky, dim light called a ‘brownout’, which made the city hard to see from the air and also saved scarce electricity. At Christmas, shoppers found it strange to walk dark streets and to enter shops without neon signs blazing. In Melbourne, a complete blackout was required, but not achieved: Flinders Street Station remained a blaze of light, as did government offices, all serving as **beacons** to guide possible Japanese bombers. Shops now closed at 6 pm, road accidents increased, trains and trams ran late.

**beacon** any form of strong bright light capable of guiding ships or planes during the night

For the average person, everyday life became more difficult. Those who travelled home in a darkened train counted every stop, because the station names had been removed to confuse any invading Japanese. Elsewhere, air-raid drills were taken more seriously. During one such drill at

the Myers department store, 6000 shop assistants, shepherded by 85 wardens, suddenly left their positions at cash registers and walked to an air-raid shelter.

## FOCUS QUESTIONS 3.2

1. What was the 'brownout'?
2. Discuss the kinds of ways that life would have become more difficult at the time.

### Conscription for overseas service

Since the *Defence Act, 1903* (Cth), the Labor Party and a small majority of Australians had opposed conscription for overseas service. The question had been bitterly contested in World War I. The issue emerged again in 1942 as Australia came under attack from Japanese forces. As the war moved into the south-west Pacific, Australia provided a large number of Australian forces to fight beside the Americans led by General MacArthur. The lawyer and Labor politician Maurice Blackburn, who opposed conscription in World War I, continued that stance, but he always supported compulsory service for home defence. In late 1942, he led the No Conscription Campaign in Victoria.

Prime Minister Curtin needed Australian troops for the Pacific War but feared a split within the labour movement, which still opposed conscription for overseas service. However, the Labor Party Conference (January 1943) agreed to introduce a bill extending the area in which conscripted Australians could serve to territories immediately beyond Papua New Guinea.

#### Source 3.23

The defence of Australia is not confined to its territorial limits. Provided adequate forces are available, it can best be secured by denying to the enemy the outer screen of islands from which attacks can be launched on the mainland. The occupation of these outposts also provides points of vantage from which offensive action can ultimately be developed ... With the passage of this bill, the whole of the Australian forces, naval, land and air, will be available to the Commander-in-Chief [General MacArthur] for employment in the South-Western Pacific Zone as defined in the bill ...

Australia has once been perilously near to the brink of disaster. No nation, not even Britain, has been in greater danger of invasion and yet lacked the resources with which to defend itself. We possess neither a large navy nor a large air force, and the most effective part of our Army was overseas when Singapore fell.

Cited in F. K. Crowley, *Modern Australia in Documents, 1939–1970*, vol. 2. Melbourne: Wren Publishing, 1973, p. 77.

### USING HISTORICAL SOURCES AS EVIDENCE 3.4

1. Examine Source 3.23. Why does Prime Minister Curtin start by making an argument about the 'territorial limits' (borders) of Australia?
2. What does Curtin see as the military and strategic value of being able to place Australian troops on islands?
3. What might Curtin be referring to when he states that Australia has been close to disaster?
4. From what you have read in this chapter, was Curtin factually correct in arguing that Australia did not have large armed forces?

Members of parliament, except for Maurice Blackburn (who was by then an independent member), voted to extend conscription to service in the South-Western Pacific. The bitter debates about the two referenda on conscription in 1916 and 1917 were not repeated at this time.<sup>11</sup>

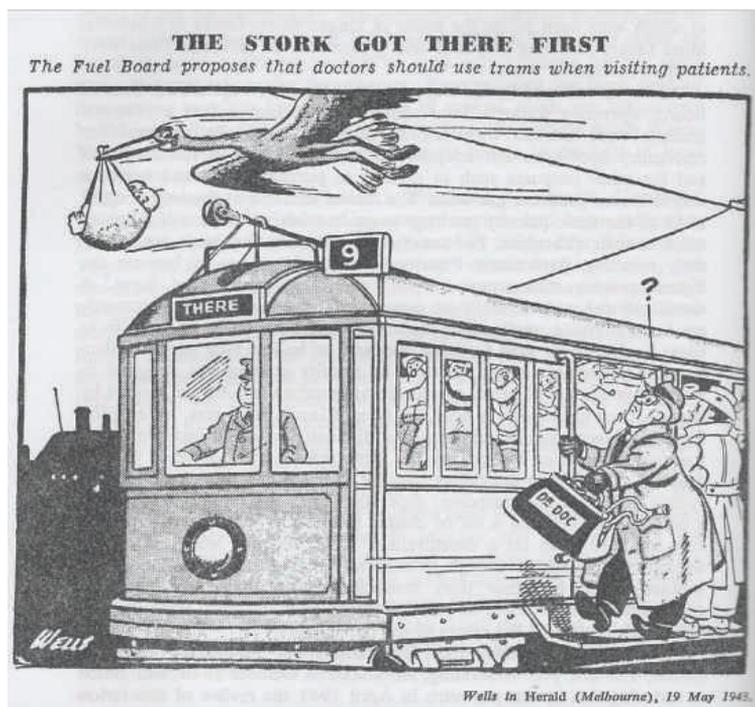
### RESEARCH TASK 3.4

On what grounds did Maurice Blackburn continue to oppose conscription for military service beyond Australia?

#### The power of humour

During times of crisis, humour prevails, allowing people to cope with trauma. Cartoons express humour and can be used by historians to assess public feeling at a given moment.

In Source 3.24, the cartoonist Wells uses absurdity to mock the government's policy of asking doctors to use public transport (instead of their cars) to visit patients. The tram is slow and massively overcrowded, so the doctor clings to the outside of the vehicle. Wells's cartoon suggests that even the stork can fly faster as it delivers two babies, meaning that the doctor will not get to his patient in time to deliver them.



← **Source 3.24** The stork got there first, Wells, 1943. Published in the *Herald*, 19 May 1943

Cartoons sometimes express serious worries. In Source 3.25, an office boy cheekily demands a pay rise to 10 pounds a week – a very large sum in 1942 – and threatens to quit for well-paid work in a munitions factory. Labour shortages caused serious problems in businesses, and undercut a manager's authority. In the cartoon, the manager looks shocked by the disrespectful young man, who in normal times would never dare to speak to his boss in this way. Cartoons can, however, often be read two ways. A working man might rather admire the cheeky fellow in the cartoon

and might have agreed that wartime conditions really gave ordinary people some leverage over employers they might previously had to obey. The young woman in the background – herself a working person – might in fact have admired the young man's self-confident outburst.



*"All right—tenner a week or I work in a munitions joint!"*

← **Source 3.25**  
*All right – tenner a week or I work in a munitions joint!*,  
 Sydney Bulletin,  
 8 April 1942

Cartoons are funny, but also express serious concerns. In Source 3.26, the cartoonist Frith comments upon the intrusive nature of government regulations, which forbade people from using certain materials in clothing. After the Fall of Malaya, rubber – which was crucial for military tyres – was in short supply. Following government instructions, an aggressive inspector lunges at a startled lady, demanding to know whether she has any rubber in her clothing. Her alarmed reaction and of three passers-by seems comical, but the cartoon has more serious implications. The title plays on an advertising jingle for Minties lollies, which ran: 'It's moments like these you need Minties.'



*"IT'S MOMENTS LIKE THESE"—*  
*"Inspectors are to visit workrooms and, if necessary, stop people in the street who might be suspected of offences against the new clothing regulations."*  
*"You got any rubber about your person?"*

← **Source 3.26** *It's moment like these,*  
 Frith, 1942

### FOCUS QUESTIONS 3.3

1. Why do historians believe that simple cartoons in newspapers might provide us with a sense of public feeling at the time of their publication?
2. Examine Sources 3.24–3.26. Why were cartoonists able to respond very quickly – almost immediately – to events as they happened?
3. What is Source 3.24 protesting about?
4. How does Source 3.25 suggest that wartime conditions might have made working people less respectful of their employers?
5. Despite being a funny cartoon, Source 3.26 hints at genuine public resentment. How and why might government clothing restrictions make the Australian people angry?
6. In your opinion, why might newspaper cartoons have been particularly effective in forming the attitudes and opinions of a large proportion of the Australian public?

## 3.3 Australian reactions to the American presence

### INQUIRY QUESTION

How did the presence of US troops in Australia work to change social and sexual values among Australians?

The most powerful challenge Australians faced on the home front was the sudden, highly visible presence of thousands of US soldiers and sailors. By 1943, there were 250 000 Americans stationed in Melbourne, Sydney, Brisbane, Rockhampton and Townsville.

In March 1942, Prime Minister Curtin welcomed the US troops.

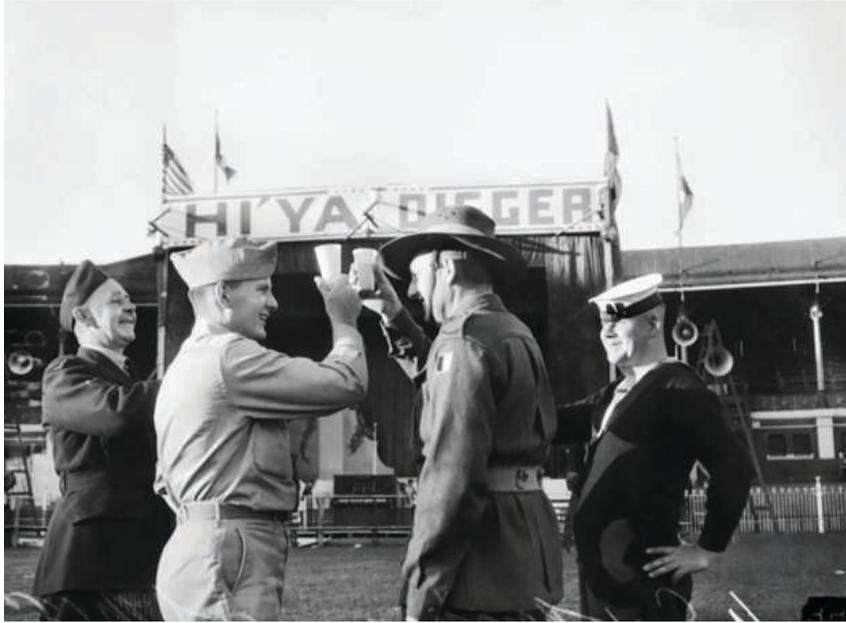
The Australian government extends warmest greeting to the American forces. It goes without saying that the personnel of the American forces will continue to receive from the Australian people the warm welcome, and to enjoy the feeling of being at home, that they have already enjoyed during the past few weeks. The warmth of that welcome will not be motivated by other than one of kinship with men and women who, largely, spring from the same stock. Our visitors think like us, speak like us, and therefore we can find a community of interest and comradeship with them that will be a firm basis when the supreme test of battle comes. Great Britain, as the British Prime Minister recently told the British Parliament, could not carry the burden of the Pacific while engaged in a life-and-death struggle with Germany and Italy. The aid that is given to us from the United States is therefore doubly welcome. We will not be left quite alone.

Source 3.27

Prime Minister John Curtin, cited in Bob Bessant et al.,  
*Readings in Australian History: The Occupation of a Continent*.  
Blackburn: Eureka Publishing, 1979, p. 247.

### USING HISTORICAL SOURCES AS EVIDENCE 3.5

1. Examine Source 3.27. Why does Prime Minister Curtin believe that Australians and Americans can work well together?
2. What is Curtin's attitude to Britain's strategic decision that it did not have the forces available to assist Australia in the Pacific war?
3. What would be some of the consequences of this change in defence policy for Australia?



↑ **Source 3.28** In this carefully-posed official photograph, the emphasis is on the friendly and respectful co-operation between the Americans (*left*) and the Australians (*right*). The structure behind them flies the Stars and Stripes, and has the cheery caption 'Hi Ya Digger' to show that the Americans were keen to learn Australian slang.

In private life, Australians generally got on well with American troops. Australian families who hosted American soldiers found them friendly, respectful, helpful and amusing. The *Instructions for American Servicemen in Australia 1942* actually advised servicemen to behave well.

#### Source 3.29

Australians, especially the girls, are a bit amazed at the politeness of American soldiers. And they say that when an American gets on a friendly footing with an Australian family, he's usually found in the kitchen, teaching the Mrs. how to make coffee, or washing the dishes.

Special Service Division, Services of Supply, United States Army; issued by War and Navy Departments Washington, D.C. 2007, *Instructions for American servicemen in Australia 1942*.<sup>12</sup>

However, feelings were not always friendly. Hostility was not usually personal, but economic: Americans earned more than the Australians and had supply stores stocked with luxury items not available to Australian citizens. Pubs and restaurants prioritised Americans, because they had much more money to spend. Australian men became jealous when American troops charmed women with their easy-going self-confidence and good manners. The Americans had smarter uniforms, were paid more and could afford to buy luxuries such as alcohol on the black (illegal) market. They could afford otherwise unobtainable nylon stockings, chocolates and cigarettes which were sought after by women. The Americans were also provided with contraceptives by the US Army.

The presence of African-American servicemen had a significant impact on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. According to Len Watson, a Queensland Aboriginal man, 'black Australians were also part of this greater awareness. The sight of Negroes 'with money in their hands; blacks who were confident and who stood up straight and looked you in the eye; blacks who were mechanics, bulldoze operators, [and] truck drivers' boosted their sense of self.'



← **Source 3.30**  
American soldier dancing on a table in Brisbane during World War II, circa 1943



← **Source 3.31** *One Sunday Afternoon in Townsville*, Roy Hodgkinson, 1945. Hodgkinson was made an official war artist in February 1942. He travelled extensively to depict Australian troops at war, but he also went to Northern Australia to see conditions there. Here, he notes the presence of American troops, especially the African-American troops at the left. Such scenes were common and gave some Australians the uneasy feeling that moral standards were slipping. The presence of the military policeman with a baton reminds us, too, that there was often friction, even fights, between American and Australian troops.

Australians grumbled about the newcomers, joking that the Americans were 'over-sexed, overpaid and over here'. There were often fights at places of entertainment, and in Melbourne the city streets became a battlefield for some 3500 Americans and Australians in a mass brawl. The Australian government allowed the newspapers to report this, but they only said that the culprits were 'soldiers'; not that Australians had fought an ugly battle with their own allies.

In Queensland, a brawl called the ‘Battle of Brisbane’ took place on 26–27 November 1942. Hundreds of American and Australian servicemen were injured, with one Australian man killed. This, too, was hushed up.

**Victory Girls** a general description of Australian girls and young women who tried to boost the morale of Australian and American troops by dressing in patriotic colours (blue, white and red) and by socialising with soldiers. For many young women, this allowed a welcome liberation from the traditional constraints of social and sexual behaviour.

However, an estimated 12–15,000 Australian women actually married American soldiers. Many made a life in the USA after the war.

### Concerns for public morality

The presence of so many Americans in Australian cities caused concern for another reason. They attracted young women, some of them schoolgirls as young as 14. These girls dressed themselves revealingly and courted American soldiers, either for romance or for money. The so-called **Victory Girls** could be seen in their hundreds in the city’s streets and made no effort to hide their activities.

People’s fears were intensified in 1942, when the press reported that one American soldier – Private Edward Leonski – was convicted of murdering three Australian women and was hanged. Leonski was known by the press as the Brownout Strangler.

## FOCUS QUESTIONS 3.4

1. Why was Leonski known as the Brownout Strangler?
2. Why would this case have made relations between Allies more difficult?
3. Research this case. What else is significant about it in terms of US law?

Some Australian artists, such as Albert Tucker, John Perceval and Arthur Boyd, noticed these open displays of sexuality and were disturbed by it. Albert Tucker explained why he created a series of paintings called *Images of Modern Evil*:

### Source 3.32

**GI** an ordinary American soldier. It is thought to have come from the initials stamped on American military equipment ‘Government issue’.

**digger** an ordinary Australian soldier. The term comes from the goldrush days when miners were called ‘diggers’.

I remember a newspaper story about girls in a back alley, with some diggers, doing a strip-tease for them – great old fun and games. This was part of the image stock-piled in my mind. Beer and sexual conquests along Swanston Street, all along St. Kilda Road from Princes Bridge, down to Luna Park at St. Kilda. The **GI**, the **digger**, the schoolgirl tarts, Victory Girls. All these schoolgirls from fourteen to fifteen would rush home after school and put on short skirts made of rags – red, white and blue – and go tarting along St. Kilda Road with the GIs and, of course, diggers.

Cited in Kate Darian-Smith, *On the Home Front: Melbourne in Wartime, 1939–1945*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990, p. 178.



↑ **Source 3.33** *Victory Girls*, Melbourne, Albert Tucker, 1943



← **Source 3.34** Don't risk it feller, circa early 1940s. Reproduced courtesy of the City of Melbourne Art and Heritage Collection. This public health education poster, produced 'for exhibition in brothels only', aimed to reduce the incidence of sexually transmitted diseases. Disapproving officials also warned servicemen about 'amateurs': young women who were not prostitutes but were prepared to experiment with sex during the war, often for gifts and treats. There was, however, very little discussion about responsibility of the men themselves for spreading infection.

### ANALYSING SOURCES AS EVIDENCE 3.1

1. Examine Source 3.33. How has Albert Tucker shown the faces of the young women and the soldiers? What feelings is he trying to convey?
2. Does his image match what he has written in Source 3.32?
3. Why was Tucker shocked by the age of some of the Victory Girls?
4. Why was Tucker alarmed by the behaviours and activities of these young women?
5. How do you think viewers of the time would view Source 3.33? Is it important that the soldiers depicted are diggers?

## 3.4 Shortages and rationing

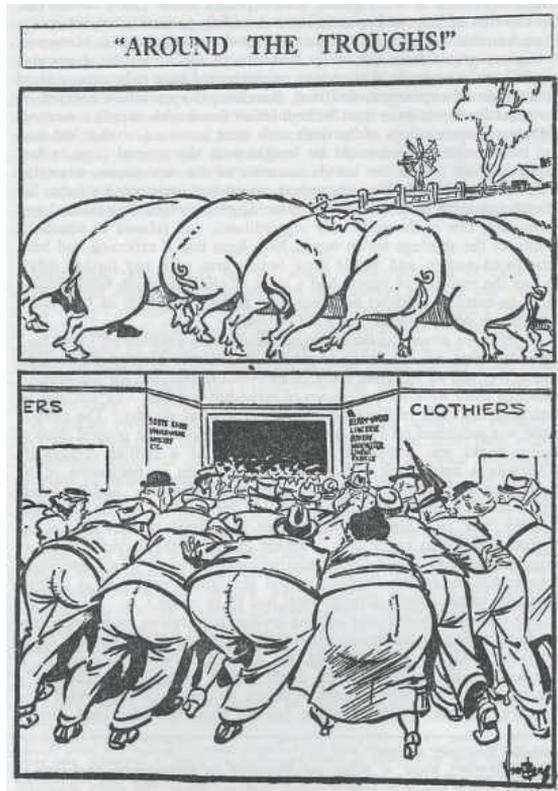
### INQUIRY QUESTION

How did Australians respond to unprecedented wartime shortages and subsequent rationing of food and other goods?

Rationing was included in part to equalise the burdens of war, as well as encourage Australians to invest in war bonds and loans to help fund the government's move to a war footing. John Curtin made calls for national unity on the home front through several speeches encouraging Australians to invest in the war. A significant campaign of war loans campaigns were launched during 1942.

### DID YOU KNOW?

An interesting campaign to encourage Australians to live austere was the amusing 'Squander Bug' Campaign which originated in Britain. Available at: <https://cambridge.edu.au/redirect/9705>



← **Source 3.35** *Around the troughs*, Armstrong, 12 May 1942. First published in *The Argus*.

### USING HISTORICAL SOURCES AS EVIDENCE 3.6

1. In Source 3.35, what is Armstrong saying about the policy of wartime rationing?
2. Why would the artist have specifically singled out the Department of War Organisation of Industry (WOI) for criticism of the shortages?
3. Armstrong also refers to the quota system in Source 3.35. To what extent did this cause panic buying and hence worsen shortages of important goods?

All social groups were affected by the severe shortage of basic foods, fuels and manufactured goods. For Australians accustomed to plentiful supplies in shops, this was a psychological shock and a physical deprivation.

As the war progressed goods became scarcer. Thousands of men who left farms and factories to enlist stopped producing goods but continued to consume food, clothing and to need equipment. Factories switched to producing war weapons, ammunition and uniforms. Imports were disrupted by enemy shipping or enemy occupation of productive regions. The Aussie 'cuppa tea' became much more difficult to provide once the Japanese captured tea-producing countries in South-East Asia. Newspapers suggested making a brew from wheat and eucalyptus leaves. The arrival of a quarter of a million American troops increased shortages of food and other goods.

## The Austerity Lifestyle and 'Dedmanism'

The government did not immediately impose restrictions. However, by 1942, it announced a **rationing** system based on that of Britain. Prime Minister Curtin explained that an **Austerity Lifestyle** – going without unnecessary goods – was an act of patriotism expected of every citizen. By reducing consumption of goods on the home front, Australia could better clothe and feed its troops, as well as sending supplies to Britain and keeping up its **Lend-Lease agreement** with America.

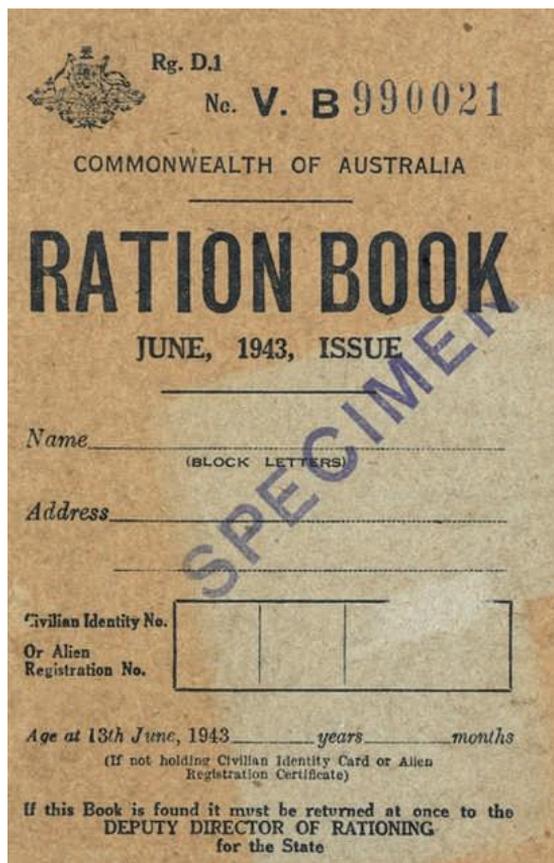
Prime Minister Curtin established a Rationing Commission, led by Senator R. Keane, which issued a booklet of coupons used to buy goods. More ration coupons were needed to buy expensive or scarcer goods. A Department of War Organisation and Industry, led by John Dedman, was also established. This body was unpopular, and its director, Dedman, suffered abuse for the cutbacks. His name became the base for a new word 'Dedmanism' meaning all tight cutbacks and restrictions.<sup>13</sup>

**rationing** a system by which a government places limits upon how much of certain products a person may buy over a given time

**Austerity Lifestyle** a government-imposed lifestyle that meant using simpler and fewer goods and services

### DID YOU KNOW?

Wartime food rations: Australians could have 226 grams of butter, one kilogram of meat and half a kilogram of sugar each per week.



**Lend-Lease agreement** created by an Act of (US) Congress in 1941, which allowed the United States to provide weapons, ammunition and other supplies to Britain and Commonwealth countries (such as Australia) and a number of other Allies

← **Source 3.36** A Commonwealth of Australia ration book, 1943. On the inside cover are printed instructions on 'How to use your ration book'. The book contains pages of coupons for clothing, tea, sugar and food. The back cover is covered in rationing slogans such as 'Rationing means FAIR SHARING!' and 'PLAN your Purchases, and COUNT YOUR COUPONS!'

Australia actually produced more food than ever during wartime, but much of it for the armed services. By 1944, 50 per cent of canned fruit, 48 per cent of butter and 75 per cent of rice went to the services.<sup>14</sup> That is why rationing was needed. The *Newcastle Chronicle*, 13 June 1942, explained the coupon system.

**Source 3.37**

**CLOTHES RATION PLAN TO MEET REAL NEEDS: 112 COUPONS TO LAST YEAR.** When shops open again next week, the Australia-wide clothes rationing scheme will operate. There will be no sales of rationed clothing or footwear this morning and on Monday. To cover the whole year's purchases there will be 112 coupons. They have to provide you with clothing for next summer and until January 15 1943. The worst mistake you can make is to rush in to buy without careful thought. If you buy unwisely now you may find later that you will have to go without things you really need. 'There is no need for panic buying', said the Minister for Customs (Senator Keane).

*Newcastle Chronicle*, 13 June 1942, cited in Nancy Keesing, *The Home Front Family Album: Remembering Australia, 1939–1945*, Sydney: Weldon Publishing, 1991, pp. 103.

### USING HISTORICAL SOURCES AS EVIDENCE 3.7

1. According to Source 3.37, what were the main items subject to rationing?
2. How long did a person have to make their ration book last?
3. What advice did the government offer its citizens? To what extent was the advice followed?

**panic buying** the irrational act, during times of shortage, of buying far more of a certain good than a person really needs

When the government announced rationing, there was **panic buying** as people rushed to the shops to stock up on necessities. The total amount of clothing available fell by 40 per cent for men and by 33 per cent for women. From then on, items in shops carried two tags: the usual price and an indication of how many coupons were needed to buy it. A pair of stockings cost 4 coupons, a dress 12 coupons, and a pair of shoes 13 coupons.<sup>15</sup>

### FOCUS QUESTIONS 3.5

1. Discuss why you think people panic buy goods in a time of crisis.
2. From your knowledge and experience, do you think these occurrences of panic buying in World War II are surprising? Why or why not?

**hoarding** in times of shortages, the act of buying and storing large quantities of certain goods, especially food

Panic buying and **hoarding** rapidly became a problem. The announcement that fabrics would also be rationed caused further panic among women who made their own clothes, leading to pushing and shoving at the fabric shelves of department stores. This in turn led to shortages of items such as woollen goods, a fact noted by a minister in 1940. The *Sydney Morning Herald*, 7 June 1941, reported:

RUSH TO BUY CLOTHES – Stampede buying following recent ministerial announcements ... has so depleted [reduced] stocks held by Melbourne traders that blankets and other articles are now virtually unobtainable.

Source 3.38

*Sydney Morning Herald*, 7 June 1941, p 15.<sup>16</sup>

Civilians who lived near soldiers' barracks suffered most. A report in Brisbane's *Courier Mail*, 12 November 1943, commented:

It has been said that Canberra, Melbourne and Sydney don't know there is a war on. Brisbane is beginning to realize it, while Townsville and Cairns have been left with no doubt about it. Butchers don't open at all some days, and when they are open only the cheaper cuts and scrag beef is available to the civilians, all the choice cuts and the pork going to the services and cafes, where 90 per cent of the patrons are servicemen. Gangs of workers on the Cairns line have not had any meat for a fortnight. There is no delivery of bread, ice, groceries, or meat, and very few of milk. When there was a glut of beans at the southern market (we had to pay more than eight times as much, for) some unfit for human consumption.

Source 3.39

*Courier Mail*, 12 November 1943, cited in Rosemary Clark, *The Home Front: Life in Australia during World War II*, Melbourne: Australia Post, 1991, p. 22.

### FOCUS QUESTIONS 3.6

1. While unnamed in Source 3.39, who do you think the servicemen were and why were shops and restaurants so keen to reserve the best food for them?
2. What foods were suddenly unavailable to civilians? Were their resentments justified?



← **Source 3.40** Sorry! No clothing yet children, Armstrong, 28 May 1942. First published in *The Argus*. This cartoon shows two naked children dressed only in leaves looking at an empty shop. The note on the window is from the Department of War Industries Organisation. The cartoonist is exaggerating, but is trying to suggest that the announcement of the quota system caused the shortages.

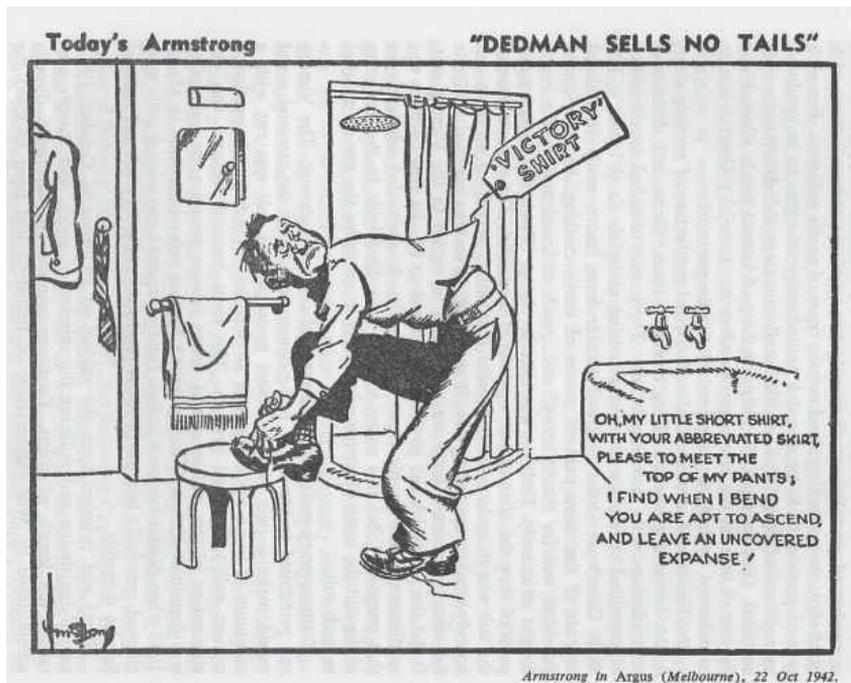
### USING HISTORICAL SOURCES AS EVIDENCE 3.8

1. Examine the cartoon in Source 3.40 and identify the point being made by the cartoonist.
2. Who was being blamed?
3. Read the message on the shop window. What is the artist trying to suggest about the attitude of the Australian Government to its people?
4. Why might the artist have chosen to represent the general public by two little children, not as adults?

Rationing made people desperate to fight over the few goods available in shops. Some resorted to crime, and petty theft rates climbed during wartime. Shoplifting rates rose as well, and there were snatch-and-grab raids on clothing hanging in dry cleaners. ‘Snowdropping’, the theft of clothing from clothes lines, was also common. A woman reported her shoes being stolen from under her nose while she was trying on a pair of new shoes.

Historian Kate Darian-Smith found other deprivations when the quality as well as quantity of clothing dropped. The government estimated that 914 400 metres of fabric could be saved by making women’s clothes simpler and less decorative. Garments like evening formal wear and children’s party costumes were banned altogether. Families were encouraged to use existing sheets and tablecloths to hand-make clothes.

Men also suffered restrictions. Traditional suits were rejected, and double-breasted suits banned because they wasted thread and buttons. Men were encouraged to wear a ‘Victory Suit’, which was cut back to the minimum: it had no collar, no pocket flaps, no sleeve cuffs or buttons, no cuffs on the trousers, and a shortened shirt with only two buttons. This was unpopular and was rejected when the hated John Dedman modelled the garment to the public.<sup>17</sup>



→ **Source 3.41** *Dedman sells no tails*, Armstrong, 28 October 1942. First published in *The Argus*.

People resented being lectured to by Dedman and other government officials.

Source 3.42 shows an overloaded Melbourne tram. Kate Darian-Smith describes how officials criticised peak-hour travellers who were not workers, but shoppers or theatre-goers. Posters inside trams depicted a woman shopper occupying a seat a worker needed. The poster's caption read 'Here is another Selfish Sue, Who dawdles all the morning through, Then late she rushes for a tram, And some poor worker has to stand.'



↑ **Source 3.42** An overloaded tram in Melbourne, June 1944

### USING HISTORICAL SOURCES AS EVIDENCE 3.9

1. Examine Source 3.42. Why are men, and not women, riding on the outside of the tram?
2. What was the point of the message on the poster that would have been inside the tram?
3. Why would it have been so important for these workers to be able to sit on the way to and from work?

### ***DID YOU KNOW?***

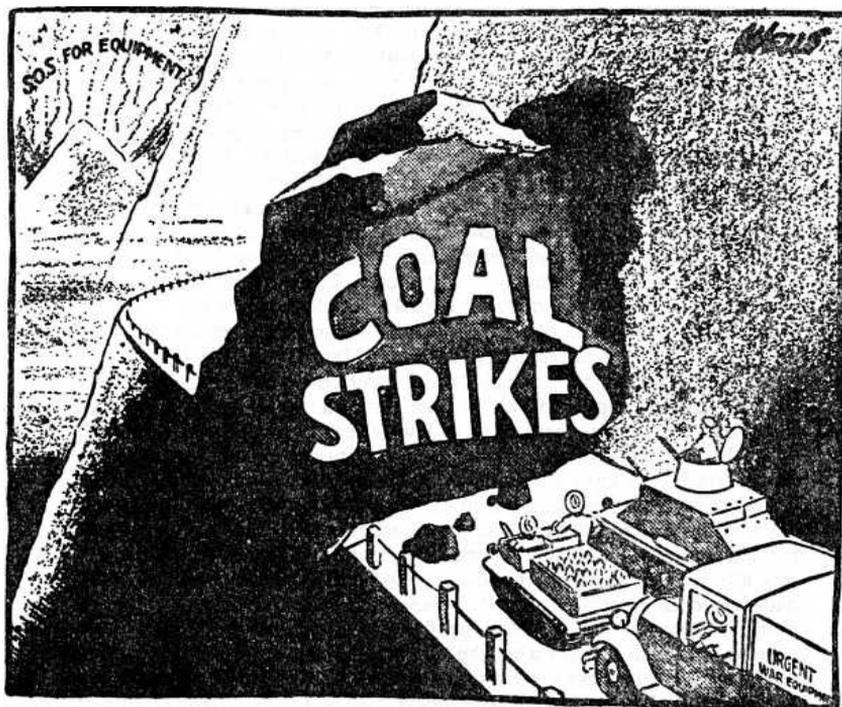
In World War II, the government was desperate for supplies of both rubber and aluminium to build planes. They offered a free Saturday afternoon movie matinee ticket to anyone who donated a sliver of aluminium. Mothers were perplexed to find out that saucepans, frypans and kettles had disappeared from their kitchens. The kids got their movie ticket, but they did not always get their dinner ...

## 3.5 Workers and industrial tensions

### INQUIRY QUESTION

To what extent did World War II place additional pressure on workers and erode their labour rights?

The massive demands for materials to win the war increased pressure on Australia's economy, especially the industrial sector. Historian Kate Darian-Smith found working conditions declined from 1941 onwards: working shifts became longer as factories moved to 24-hour production. All adults worked harder even in office jobs where women took the place of men and did extra work. Women at the Footscray Ammunition Factory worked 12-hour shifts on either six or seven days of the week, with one 20-minute lunch-break.<sup>18</sup>



↑ **Source 3.43** *Blocking the road*, Wells, 24 February 1942. First published in *The Herald*.

### USING HISTORICAL SOURCES AS EVIDENCE 3.10

1. Examine Source 3.43. Describe and analyse the key images and words in this cartoon.
2. Think about the cartoon's title and identify Wells's point in drawing this cartoon.
3. What statement is he making about patriotism?

Workers sensed the war emergency was used by employers to cut **working conditions**. Many bosses thought it was patriotic to slash wages and conditions, and unpatriotic to defend labour rights. Unionism was judged unpatriotic. There were 4123 labour disputes during the war, with 90 per cent of them in New South Wales and focused on the coal industry. In Victoria, by contrast, there were fewer strikes than before the war. Menzies at one point even described strikes as a ‘weapon of savagery’.

**working conditions** a general term covering all aspects of a worker’s experience, such as rate of pay, time for breaks, the length of the working day and allowance for holidays

In January 1942, Prime Minister Curtin announced measures to cut coal consumption, including restrictions on gas, lighting, fuel, transport and industry.

Measures outlined by Mr. Curtin in the scheme to save 31 000 tons of coal included:

- Review of the government’s decision to allow miners to take a nine-day holiday at Christmas.
- A campaign to weed out of the coal mining industry a small corps of malcontents and irresponsibles believed to be fomenters [troublemakers] of stoppages.
- Prosecutions against the responsible parties, either in the management of or among the employees of mines who cause absenteeism or breaches of regulations.
- Transfer of 600 additional men from the services and other industries to the coalmines.

Mr. Curtin said production of coal in Australia this year was estimated at 12 500 000 tons. Demand for coal was now at the rate of 14 800 000 tons a year.

Source 3.44

*The Herald-Sun*, cited in Andrew Bolt, ed, *Our Home Front, 1929–1945*, Melbourne: Wilkinson Books, 1993, p. 193.

Prime Minister Curtin also commented on stoppages in coal production.

The government believes that the removal of the minority of malcontents and irresponsibles from the [coal] industry will go a long way towards maintaining and increasing coal production, Mr. Curtin added. The irresponsibles largely comprise youths of military age and men engaged in other occupations besides mining, such as taxi drivers, starting price bookmakers, billiard-room proprietors, dog trainers and the like. These men have become miners to obtain protection from call-up. I am directing experienced officers to make thorough investigations at each colliery to identify these men for exclusion.

Source 3.45

*The Sun News Pictorial*, cited in Andrew Bolt, ed, *Our Home Front, 1929–1945*, Melbourne: Wilkinson Books, 1993, p. 193.

Industrial striking continued for the six years between 1939–45 and was at its highest in the first and last phases on the war. A notable example of a victory for Australian women, was in the textiles industry. In Sydney in 1943 at Alexandria Spinning Mills, striking women achieved a small victory of receiving a pay increase from 54% to 60% of the male rate of pay.

### USING HISTORICAL SOURCES AS EVIDENCE 3.11

1. Why was the massive strike rate in the coal industry a serious threat to both life on the home front and the conduct of the war effort?
2. Examine Source 3.45. Describe what Prime Minister Curtin meant by using the words 'malcontents' and 'irresponsibles'.
3. What actions did he intend to take against these 'malcontents'?
4. How might a trade union leader have provided a different interpretation of the industrial action of these 'irresponsibles'?

## 3.6 Censorship and propaganda on the home front

### INQUIRY QUESTION

What was the role of censorship and propaganda on the home front in Australia, and what were their main techniques?

As in World War I, the Australian Government (through the Department of Information) used censorship to control the flow of information to the public, and propaganda to convince civilians to support the war effort. All publications, especially newspapers and magazines, were tightly controlled. The government also had an even more powerful instrument with which to control information and encourage patriotism. Historian Kate Darian-Smith explains:

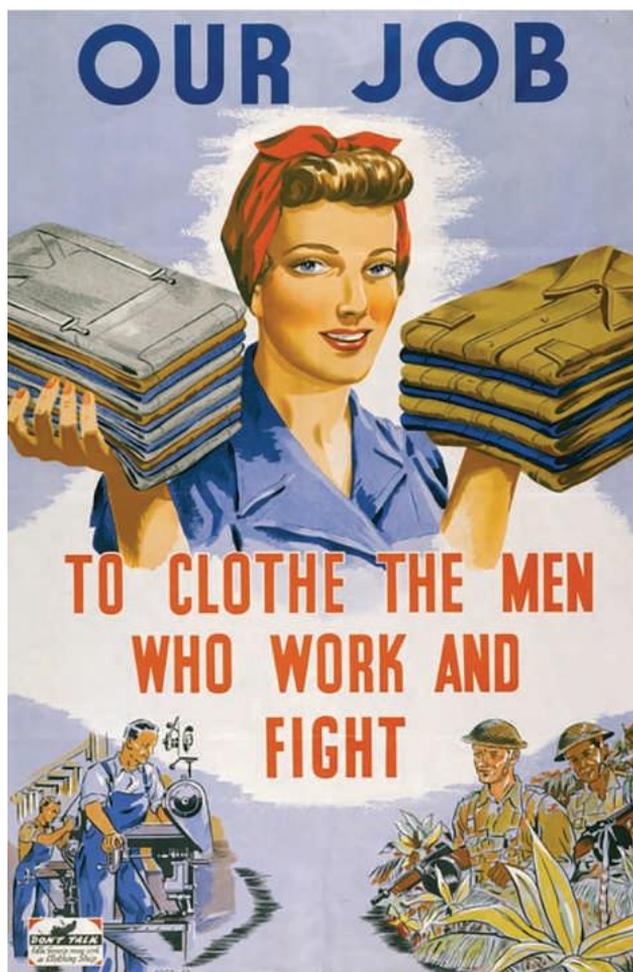
#### Source 3.46

The Second World War was the first major event in Australian life where the radio was an influential news source, and by 1941 almost eighty per cent of households owned one. The directives of the Department of Information extended to all radio broadcasts as well as newspapers and magazines, and as a result the diversity of news or opinion in the press was strictly limited. [...] Reportage of military events placed the Allied forces in as favourable a light as possible. For example, when Darwin was bombed by the Japanese on 19 February 1942, 243 people were killed and 300 to 400 were wounded, but the official announcement on 20 February mentioned only fifteen fatalities and twenty-four injuries. Such distortion of the news, and especially military events, was justified on the grounds that it was necessary to boost morale and prevent civilian panic. However, censorship also meant that civilians were particularly susceptible to unofficial rumours about the military situation. As survivors from Darwin trickled south, alarming stories which probably over-estimated the damage circulated widely.

Kate Darian-Smith, *On the Home Front: Melbourne in Wartime, 1939–1945*.  
Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990, p. 33.

### USING HISTORICAL SOURCES AS EVIDENCE 3.12

1. Examine Source 3.46. Why might radio ownership create great opportunities for the control of information?
2. How did officials justify the need for censorship?
3. Discuss one serious example of misinformation.
4. According to Darian-Smith, how and why did this propaganda policy backfire and possibly cause more uncertainty among civilians?

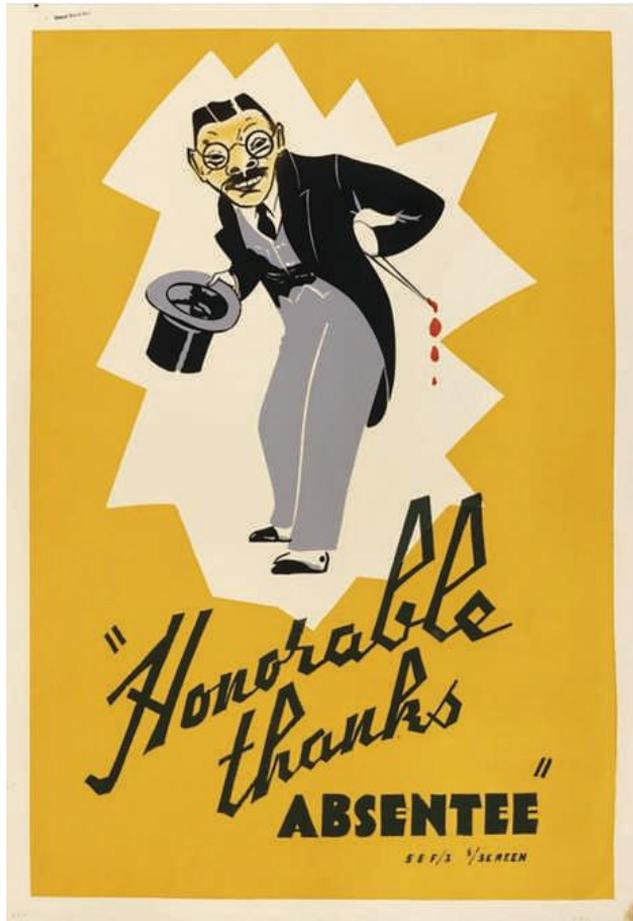


← **Source 3.47** *Our job: To clothe the men who work and fight*, Australian government wartime poster

As in World War I, visual propaganda was used extensively to urge the civilian population to assist the war effort, to cheerfully accept shortages and restrictions, and to work hard. Historians now analyse these poster images to understand what messages the government was most anxious to communicate.

### USING HISTORICAL SOURCES AS EVIDENCE 3.13

1. Examine Source 3.47. What is the government's propaganda message in this poster?
2. Who is the artist accusing in this image?
3. Do you think this message was effective or not?
4. Discuss whether or not overworked clothing workers of the time might have resented such a message.



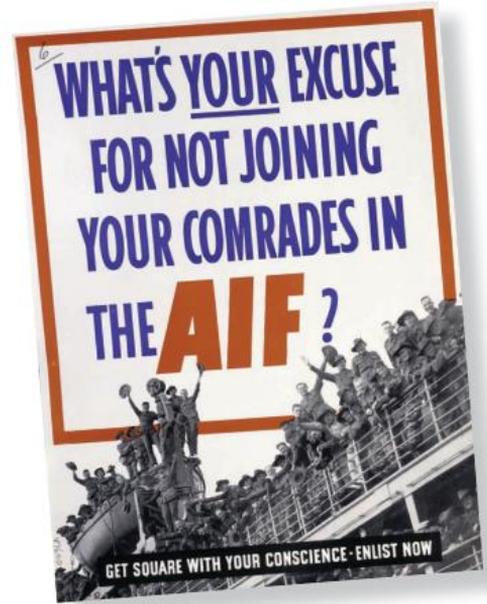
↑ **Source 3.48** *Honorable thanks, absentee*, Australian government wartime poster

Source 3.48 provides evidence that workers were fatigued from excessive work and were taking days off. Illness was another cause. For women, however, the needs of domestic management and childcare often forced them to take days off. They often recorded the reason as 'stomach sickness', which suggested period pain. The figure is a sleek Japanese gentleman who turns to the viewer and thanks the absentee worker for not contributing to Australia's war effort. The literal message is that any shirker is actually helping the enemy, but it hints that an absentee is committing treason.

Sources 3.49–3.55 are also government propaganda images.



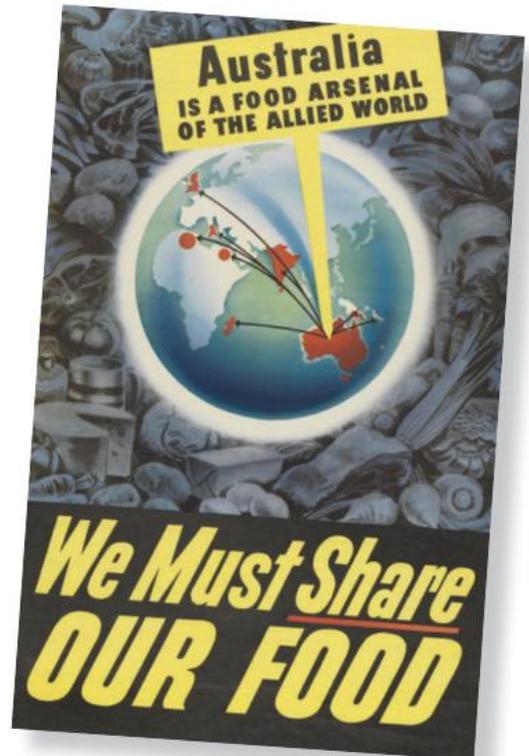
↑ **Source 3.49** One in – all in: Join the AIF today, Australian government wartime poster



↑ **Source 3.50** What's your excuse for not joining your comrades in the AIF? Get square with your conscience – Enlist now, Australian government wartime poster



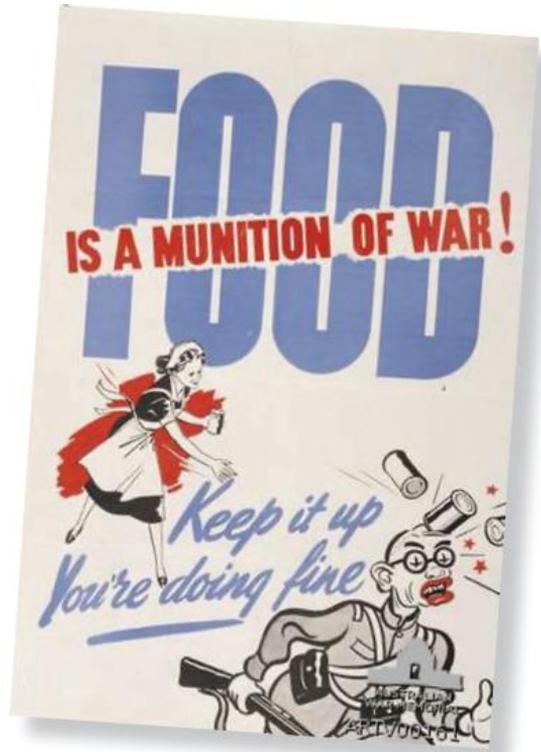
↑ **Source 3.51** Doing a grand job. Join the WAAF and play your part in the big task ahead, Australian government wartime poster



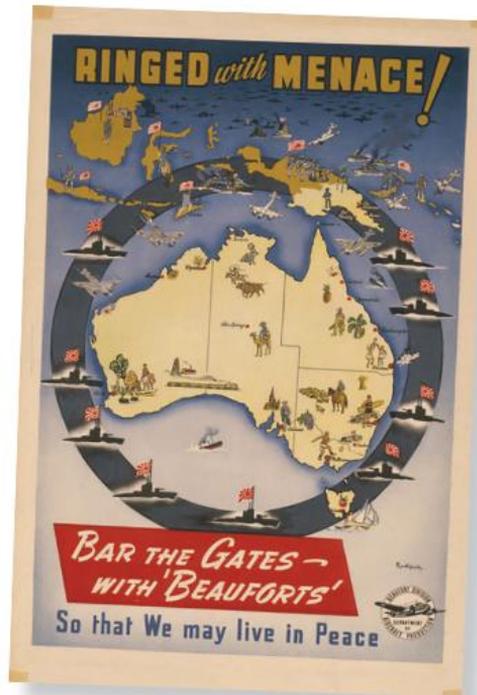
↑ **Source 3.52** Australia is a food arsenal of the Allied world. We must share our food, Australian government wartime poster



↑ **Source 3.53** Stop! Waste paper has vital war uses, Australian government wartime poster



↑ **Source 3.54** Food is a munition of war! Keep it up. You're doing fine, Australian government wartime poster



↑ **Source 3.55** Ringed with menace! Bar the gates – with Beauforts, so that we may live in peace, Australian government wartime poster

## USING HISTORICAL SOURCES AS EVIDENCE 3.14

1. Sources 3.49–3.55 feature government propaganda images. In pairs, discuss the meaning of each one by a close analysis of each image and its key parts.
2. What was the main message of each image?
3. Who was the target of the criticism in each message?

### 3.7 Chapter summary

Here are some dot-points for you to consider and add to:

#### Continuity

- At the outbreak of war, the Australian Government and people still loyally and automatically supported Britain's war effort.
- Propaganda continued to be an important instrument of federal government influence over the civilian population.
- Censorship of all forms of information continued to be crucial in managing the public's morale in times of crisis.
- Conscription (in the form of a militia known as the Citizen Military Force (CMF)) was again used to boost numbers in the armed forces, but now also for overseas service.
- Industrial striking on the home front continued, as with World War I.

#### Change

- In 1939, there was visibly less enthusiasm for the war than there had been in 1914.
- The Fall of Singapore in 1942 removed the illusion that Australia was protected from attack.
- Prime Minister Curtin signed the Statute of Westminster, giving Australia far greater independence in making foreign policy decisions.
- After 1942, Australia was forced to abandon its longstanding military alliance with Britain and align its foreign policy with the United States.
- For the first time, the home front also became a war front, as Australia came under multiple attacks that created a credible fear of imminent invasion.
- The National Security Regulations gave the federal government unprecedented powers to control the country's economy and social life.
- The government coordinated a massive build-up of Australia's industrial capacity.
- Conscription was extended from the home front to include active service, specifically in the Pacific region.
- The introduction of the radio to 80 per cent of households extended the government's ability to convey and control information to the Australian public.
- Rationing of food and clothing led to the emergence of the Black Market.
- Radical 'austerity' restrictions made clothing simpler.
- The labour conditions and rights of working people declined in some industries, such as coal, in order to support the war effort.

### 3.8 End-of-chapter activities

#### Consolidating your understanding

Complete the following questions to help revise the key events, ideas, perspectives and experiences that shaped the home front experience in Australia between 1939 and 1950.

1. Evaluate the relative importance of events in the war in the Pacific that led to Australia's strategic alliance with the United States.
2. Why does historian Kate Darian-Smith argue that the Pacific War was 'the greatest crisis in [Australia's] history'?
3. What did the Japanese raid on Darwin reveal about Australia's defence capacity in 1942?
4. What effect did the Japanese mini-submarine raid of Sydney Harbour have on the morale of the home front public?
5. How did rumours of the Brisbane Line affect Australian public opinion?
6. Why did the campaign to extend conscription to war service succeed in 1943, when it had failed in 1916 and 1917?
7. To what extent can political cartoons be used by the historian to judge the mood of the general public in a time of crisis?
8. What impacts did the presence of large numbers of American troops in Australia during World War II have on Australian society?
9. What impact did the experience of rationing have on the Australian home front public?
10. Why did the war emergency result in some loss of labour rights for Australian workers?

#### Learning to identify and state the significance of a key event: the annotated timeline

In the grid below, demonstrate that you can briefly state what happened in a given event, and then identify its significance in terms of the overall home front experience.

Date	Event	What happened?	What was its significance to Australia?
3 September 1939	Declaration of war	Australia declares war on Germany	Australia's support of Britain draws it into another world war
January 1940	The first Australian troops depart for service with the British in the Middle East		
July 1940	Formation of the Volunteer Defence Corps		
7 October 1941	Labor politician John Curtin becomes Prime Minister		
19 February 1942	Bombing of Darwin and other cities by Japanese planes		

Date	Event	What happened?	What was its significance to Australia?
18 April 1942	Australia's armed forces are placed under the command of General Douglas MacArthur		

### Evaluating the historical significance of World War II in changing Australian society

Use the following activity to outline the impacts of the war effort on Australian society during World War II. This activity could help you sort your ideas for this topic ahead of writing essays or revising for exam preparation. Choose your main points from the list below.

#### List of terms

Instruction: Create a mind map in your exercise book or computer. Using the list of terms below, make study notes about the political, social, economic and military impacts of World War II on Australia.

- |                               |                                   |
|-------------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| US soldiers                   | South-West Pacific Area           |
| Japanese mini-submarines      | <i>Kuttabul</i>                   |
| Darwin/Broome/Townsville      | Country Women's Association       |
| militarised Japan             | air-raid shelters                 |
| Brisbane Line                 | brownout                          |
| <i>Images of modern evil</i>  | conscription for overseas service |
| Fall of Singapore             | Black Market                      |
| over-sexed and over-paid      | Victory Girls                     |
| Prime Minister John Curtin    | Edward Leonski                    |
| Labor Party                   | rationing                         |
| Department of Home Security   | austerity                         |
| Dedmanism                     | Lend-Lease                        |
| rationing                     | panic buying                      |
| snowdropping                  | hoarding                          |
| Maribyrnong Munitions Factory | Victory Suit                      |
| Citizen Military Force        | irresponsibles                    |
| Volunteer Defence Corps       | propaganda                        |
| Battle for Australia          | ensorship                         |
| General Douglas MacArthur     | radios                            |

### Key *POLITICAL* aspects of the impact of World War II on Australia

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### Key *SOCIAL* aspects of the impact of World War II on Australia

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### Key *ECONOMIC* aspects of the impact of World War II on Australia

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### Key *MILITARY* aspects of the impact of World War II on Australia

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### Evaluating the historical significance of ideas and events

1. List and then rank the impacts of the war emergency on Australian society on the home front.
2. How justified do you think the increasing *social control* of the Australian people was in the context of a war emergency?
3. How justified do you think the increasing *control of information* was in the context of the war situation?
4. What were the *positives* and the *negatives* of the war emergency in terms of the Australian economy?
5. Debrief as a class. Having listened to your classmates' arguments and rankings, would you change yours? If so, which ones and why?

### Constructing an argument: essay writing

1. 'The war emergency resulted in the Australian Federal Government taking on unprecedented powers and exerting strict control over the civilian population.' To what extent do you agree with this statement?
2. To what extent were the trade unions and the labour rights of workers challenged during the war emergency?
3. In what ways were propaganda and censorship used to maintain government control of the war effort?

### Extension reading

Kate Darian-Smith, *On the Home Front: Melbourne in Wartime, 1939–1945*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990.

This remains one of the finest and most detailed studies of the home front experience, with useful chapters focused on topics such as Work, Housing, Family.

Entertainment and Sexuality and Morality.

Exhibition catalogue, *Women Work for Victory in World War II*. Melbourne: Old Treasury Building 2020.

This useful catalogue reproduces a wealth of images from the exhibition of the same name, and offers up-to-date scholarship in the role of women during the war.

# CHAPTER 4

## Experiences of different groups on the home front, 1939–1950



**Source 4.0** A painting that appeared on the cover of *The Australian Women's Weekly*, Virgil Riley, 13 September 1941. A young woman throws up her arms in a V-shape (the sign for victory), but she also seems to be calling out for help. Her arms are matched by two lines of airplanes, reminding us that women were crucial in manufacturing both airplanes and bombs. The burning city in the distance may be a reference to the Blitz, Germany's firebombing of London.

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## Chapter timeline

World events	Date	Australian events
<b>3 September 1939:</b> Britain declares war on Germany, after Nazi Germany's invasion of Poland	<b>1939</b>	<b>3 September 1939:</b> Prime Minister Menzies announces to the nation that Australia has declared war on Germany
<b>3 September 1939:</b> Prime Minister Neville Chamberlain appoints Winston Churchill as First Lord of the Admiralty	<b>1939</b>	<b>9 September 1939:</b> The National Security Act is passed
<b>May–June 1940:</b> Fall of France - this led to a surge of enlistments for the 2nd AIF		<b>October 1939:</b> Announcement of a 2nd AIF
<b>June 1940:</b> Italy joins the war - This led to the interment/poor treatment of Australian/Italians		<b>July 1940:</b> Petrol rationing
<b>22 June 1941:</b> The Nazi invasion of Soviet Russia opens up a new front in the war	<b>1941</b>	<b>15 December 1941:</b> Prime Minister Curtin announces that women may work in war industries
<b>7 December 1941:</b> Japanese attack on US naval base at Pearl Harbor	<b>1941</b>	
<b>14 January 1942:</b> German submarines attack Allied shipping off the coast of the United States	<b>1942</b>	<b>January 1942:</b> The Australian Government creates the Manpower Directorate, with extensive powers of 'industrial conscription'
<b>11 March 1942:</b> US General Douglas MacArthur makes a secret escape from the Philippines	<b>1942</b>	<b>March 1942:</b> Constance Duncan unsuccessfully proposes the creation of a national childcare scheme to allow women to enter the workforce
		<b>18 April 1942:</b> Australia's armed forces are placed under the command of General Douglas MacArthur
<b>4–7 June 1942:</b> The Battle of Midway halts Japan's advance into the Pacific region	<b>1942</b>	<b>June 1942:</b> The Manpower Directorate begins to recruit married women only for work in war industries
<b>13 June 1942:</b> The United States establishes its Office of War Information for propaganda purposes		
<b>7 August 1942:</b> US forces land at Guadalcanal	<b>1942</b>	<b>August 1942:</b> The Manpower Directorate moves to full recruitment of women for work in war industries
<b>23 August 1942:</b> Russia's fierce resistance to Nazi Germany's invading forces last to 2 February 1943, and result in a devastating defeat for Hitler's army, halting its advance into Eastern Europe and Russia	<b>1943</b>	<b>February 1943:</b> Creation of Australia's first female cartoon hero, Wanda the War Girl

World events	Date	Australian events
<b>5 February 1943:</b> General Dwight Eisenhower is put in command of Allied forces in North Africa	<b>1943</b>	
<b>6 and 9 August 1945:</b> Atomic bombs are dropped on Hiroshima and Nagasaki, leading to Japan's surrender	<b>1945</b>	

## 4.1 Introduction

### INQUIRY QUESTION

To what extent did a person's experience of the war on the home front vary according to their age, sex, social class or race?

As in World War I, during World War II, Australians discovered that although everyone experienced the war, they did not experience it in the same way. A national emergency like a war requires people to make sacrifices, but it can also offer them opportunities. Depending on your age, class, ethnicity and sex, you might have had a very different experience of the war to that of others.



→ **Source 4.1** A woman stacking practice bombs before transit to the explosives filling factory in South Australia in 1943

## 4.2 Experiences of women on the home front

### INQUIRY QUESTION

To what extent were Australian women's lives changed by the experience of paid work on the home front during World War II?

In the year 2020, the world commemorated the 75th anniversary of the end of World War II. That same year, the Victorian Government sponsored a groundbreaking exhibition to acknowledge the often underestimated role of women during this conflict: *Women Work for Victory in World War II*. This was researched and curated by the staff of the Old Treasury Building. It was funded by the Victorian Government's 75th Anniversary of the End of World War Two Grant Program.<sup>1</sup>

Historian Catherine Speck sees an enormous difference in the way women experienced the home front in World War II, compared with women during the Great War. Source 4.2 gives her view of the situation.

The home front in the earlier war was a safe place, a feminine space, but this distinction was overtaken by events in the Second World War. The home front was under threat. Women were no longer restricted to private citizen status. They could choose to join one of the women's services and this impacted on notions of war and masculinity and, for some, the long-held belief that only a country's male citizens could defend the country.

Source 4.2

Catherine Speck, *Painting Ghosts: Australian Women Artists in Wartime*, Melbourne: Craftsman House, 2004, p. 103.

## Women's history and feminist history

One of the historian's most important duties is to draw attention to the role of groups which played a significant role in an event, but which have since been underestimated or forgotten. In Australia's armed conflicts, the action and contribution of women, in particular, were long under-appreciated. There is a tendency to assume that Australian women played 'minor' support roles, such as sending gifts and letters to the troops. Nothing could be further from the truth. Women *did* send items to their male loved ones, but they also made bombs, constructed airplanes, made uniforms, and serviced and armed aircraft. They were one of the main reasons that an underprepared nation and weak economy finally rose to meet the supreme threat posed by World War II.

The role of women's history is to draw attention back to the full scope and true significance of women in Australia's conflicts. **Feminist history** further credits the action and **agency** of women, but also aims to delve into the social expectations and power relationships that govern and sometimes restrict women's lives.

Historian Patsy Adam-Smith is well-qualified to write about Australian women at war, having herself volunteered for the Australian Army Medical Women's Service in 1941. Once the war was over, she travelled thousands of kilometres across Australia to record the experiences of the 'brave, modest, forgotten women' who gave so much, only to be neglected once the war was over.

In Source 4.3, Patsy Adam-Smith introduces her book *Australian Women at War* (1984).

**feminist history** any history that examines the role of women in society, and analyses how women's lives might be limited or affected by power relationships between men and women  
**agency** the power or independence to take action

**Source 4.3**

*Australian Women at War* is a history of how women have responded to war, from 1900, when the first nurses sailed to the Boer War, to 1945 and its aftermath. In World War I, the only outlet for women was knitting socks, packing 'comforts' for troops and raising money for the war effort. But when World War II threatened our shores, Australian women *demand*ed a chance to defend their country. They suddenly became a part of the greatest social experiment with women to be carried out in Australia. Never before had they been so emancipated [freed] from the tyranny of home, family and conventional society.

Patsy Adam-Smith, *Australian Women at War*, Melbourne: Nelson, 1984, p. i.



↑ **Source 4.4** A 1943 poster of a woman in overalls wearing a headscarf. She leans over a table, clenching her right fist with an imploring glare out to the viewer, urging them to 'Change over to a victory job'. She is set against the Australian flag in full colour.

## Guidelines for servicewomen's behaviour and dress

Given that the scale of women's action was unprecedented, it is unsurprising that documents – usually generated by men – reveal unease about their presence. *The Brisbane Courier Mail* published guidelines for servicewomen's behaviour and dress.

Army girls must act like ladies. Rules for ladylike behaviour in the women's Army and Air Force are calculated to discourage any wartime abandon [lack of constraint]. They are permitted to smoke in restaurants, but on no account in trams, trains or on the streets. Girls in both organisations are permitted to drink 'in moderation'. Any excesses are to be reported and certain hotels near country camps are out of bounds. Make-up must be discreet, as must nail polish, while hair must be short or rolled up clear of the collar. They must wear their hats straight and wear greatcoats buttoned up, not flapping. [They] must endeavor to attract as little attention to themselves as possible.

Source 4.5

Patsy Adam-Smith, *Australian Women at War*, Melbourne: Nelson, 1984, p. 266.

It is in such documents that feminist historians find evidence of the power relationships by which men attempted to control and dominate women.

### USING HISTORICAL SOURCES AS EVIDENCE 4.1

1. What limitations were being placed on women in the **auxiliary services**? Were these limitations successful or not?
2. Did the *Courier Mail's* concerns have anything to do with the conduct of the war? Explain.
3. What was the overall intention of defining and limiting what women did to make themselves look attractive?

**auxiliary services** any organisations that do not actually fight, but which provide back-up to troops during a war

One of the most important changes to Australian society was that women demanded, and eventually obtained, greater participation in the economic life of our nation. The war inspired them to demand the removal of traditional limitations on women, and also forced the Australian Government to agree to their demands. However, it should be pointed out that Menzies and Curtin both indicated that women's participation was only for the duration of the war. Historian Michael McKernan states that it was out of 'necessity' that Curtin permitted women into the workforce in greater numbers. Indeed, there was only an overall 5% increase in women's participation in the workforce throughout the war - the significant change was in the types of work that women could undertake.

Living as we do in a society that now has a significant – but still not complete – degree of equal opportunity, it is difficult to imagine a much more traditional world in which women were restricted by strong social expectations and limitations. Source 4.6 may help you understand concerns that working women may lose their 'femininity'.



## FOCUS QUESTIONS 4.1

1. How does the artist suggest that work in the Land Army is both enjoyable and healthy?
2. Why would the sight of this woman's trim, stylish military uniform have been very new, and enormously attractive, to women in the 1940s?
3. Why would the sight of a woman driving a tractor have been extremely new to both the men and women of the 1940s?

↑ **Source 4.6** The posters of World War II did more than urge women to serve: they also reassured people that they need not be worried about women taking on such tasks. This poster shows a woman confidently doing a muscular job driving a large tractor, and emphasises the look of breezy confidence on her face, as well as her stylish uniform. Her face is slightly tanned, confirming the idea that this outdoor work was healthful.

## Women in industry

On 15 December 1941, just a week after the news of the Japanese bombing of Pearl Harbor, Prime Minister John Curtin responded to the heightened sense of crisis by announcing that the Government had decided:

### Source 4.7

to approve of the principle of the extensive employment of women in industries where men were not available in sufficient numbers to attain the scale of production approved as a war objective.

Quoted in Catherine Speck, *Painting Ghosts: Australian Women Artists in Wartime*, Melbourne: Craftsman House, 2004, p. 104.

When the war broke out, Australian women immediately offered to help out in the war industries. The Australian Government was initially not keen: it accepted women as nurses, because this was an existing and accepted traditional role, but initially did not consider that women could do heavy industrial jobs, such as making munitions, or heavy farming labour. But the expansion of the war into the Pacific region after December 1941 required many more men, taking many from factories and farms, and creating a demand for women's labour. By August 1942, the **Manpower Directorate** – responsible for recruiting workers into key industries – was recruiting women. For many, this was the first time they had stepped out of the domestic role of housekeeper and enjoyed the pride and independence of earning their own wage. For example, in 1939, only 10 per cent of munitions workers were female; by 1943, this had risen to 50 per cent.<sup>2</sup> Many women dealt with criticism over entering the workforce. Many were labelled as 'bad mothers' and blamed for rising crime rates among juveniles. Many women had to juggle the demands of home with work, which often resulted in high absenteeism among female workers. This only served to provide male workers and bosses with leverage that women were not worth equal pay as they were unreliable.

**Manpower Board (or Directorate)** established in January 1942, given extensive powers to ensure that there were workers available for the industries that were crucial to the war effort

### Recruiting married women

The Government allowed married women to work in government factories as early as June 1941, but by the crisis of 1942, the Manpower Directorate was anxiously trying to recruit them. Official vision was rather limited – the Government preferred women without children (or with children of school age) – as it hesitated to provide childcare, and was reluctant to provide healthcare for female workers.

It also hesitated to offer women shorter working shifts. Australian women with children clearly indicated that they could still do work if they could be offered shifts in the afternoon, when childcare was less demanding. The Government understood this factor, but was blocked by some employers, who complained that stopping machines to change over workers would interrupt and decrease production. In reality, a part-time worker simply cost more in wages than a full-time worker.

In March 1942, Ada Constance Duncan (1896–1970), a specialist in foreign affairs and an energetic campaigner for social welfare submitted a plan for a nationwide childcare scheme, but the Australian Government did not agree.

### Women in munitions industries

Women eventually worked in a large number of war industries, but the greatest attention was concentrated on those who worked in ammunition production. Government propaganda posters and media releases emphasised the value of these workers. One reason for this is that the situation was so new: munitions work (traditionally done by men) was heavy and dangerous industrial labour. It was also seen as a patriotic action by women, since it directly put bullets in the guns of men at the front. Historian Darian-Smith also believes that munitions work was 'respectable', so women from 'good families' were not embarrassed to do this work. At the same time, it paid very well: there was plenty of overtime, and pay rates were high. Women employed as servants or humble workers freely admitted that the financial benefit was considerable for them to move into industrial work. Though it was attractive, due to Manpower Restrictions many women were forced to remain in the textile industry despite trying to escape to higher paying munitions work.



↑ **Source 4.8** *Weighing Cordite*, Sybil Craig, 1945. This peaceful painting hides the immensely dangerous and delicate nature of the work these women were doing as they handled high explosives. One worker recalled that she daily held in her hands enough explosives to blow an ocean liner out of the water. In addition, the explosives were toxic, being full of mercury. The extra danger-money of one shilling and sixpence paid per day was meant to be compensation for this health risk. Moreover, to keep the materials dry, the factory was heated to 32° Celsius, and was almost unbearable during a sweltering Australian summer.<sup>3</sup>



↑ **Source 4.9** Two women working in an armaments factory in Bendigo in April 1943. They are superheating the barrel of an anti-aircraft gun in preparation for its final straightening.



↑ **Source 4.10** Women did not only make ammunition, they also armed planes with it. Here, members of the Women's Auxiliary Australian Airforce arm a Wirraway plane with a machine gun.

Although they were doing their patriotic duty, these women did encounter hostility, especially from the trade unions that argued that their (male) members might lose their jobs to women, whose wages were much lower. Strike action was threatened, but Prime Minister John Curtin resolved the problem by promising solemnly:

All women employed under the conditions approved shall be employed only for the duration of the war and shall be replaced by men as they become available.

**Source 4.11**

Exhibition catalogue, *Women Work for Victory in World War II*. Melbourne: Old Treasury Building, 2020, p. 4.

Curtin also created a Women's Employment Board to scrutinise any challenges created by the greater employment of women.

## Women in the auxiliary services



↑ Source 4.12 Join us in a Victory Job poster

### USING HISTORICAL SOURCES AS EVIDENCE 4.2

1. Describe the ways women are depicted in the poster in Source 4.12.
2. Does Source 4.12 suggest war work is of benefit to women as well as the nation? Explain.

## Women in auxiliary units of the armed forces

Early in 1941, Australia's armed forces agreed to form women's auxiliary units. Until then, women's work in the armed forces was restricted to the Australian Army Nursing Service, which was a part of the Australian Army. In February 1941, the Air Force formed the Women's Auxiliary Australian Air Force. In April, the Navy formed the Women's Royal Australian Naval Service. The Army established the Australian Women's Army Service in August. Other organisations included the Australian Army Medical Women's Service and the Royal Australian Navy Nursing Service. By 1942, nurses in the Australian Army Nursing Service were allowed to hold a military rank. It should be remembered, however, that Menzies believed firmly that war was 'men's business'. Historian Michael McKernan has questioned the nature of the work conducted by women in the armed forces, and concluded that it was mostly clerical.

## The long-term significance of women's participation

We know that the war created new opportunities for women to do jobs normally done by men, but how long did this experience last? For historian Darian-Smith, who based her doctoral research and subsequent book on interviews with 100 women who had experienced the war in Melbourne, 'the war altered the occupational status of women even if only briefly and marginally'.<sup>4</sup> This is not surprising, given Prime Minister Curtin's promise that women's employment would end with the war that necessitated it. Nonetheless, it had created a precedent: women had new experiences in the workforce and had proved themselves. This new self-confidence would feed powerfully into later post-war movements for women's rights and workplace participation. After the war when they were encouraged to return to their homes with the promise of whitegoods that would make life so much easier.

### Wanda the War Girl



↑ Source 4.13 Wanda the War Girl, Kate O'Brien, c. 1943. The first Australian female superhero.

While women did thousands of hours of extra work – paid or otherwise – the popular press came up with the idea of a female warrior. The *Sunday Telegraph* invented ‘Wanda the War Girl’ in February 1943, and this fantasy proved enormously popular. The cartoonist, Kate O’Brien, claimed that she created the character of Wanda ‘to give Australian service girls credit for the marvelous job they have been doing’. However, Wanda was not a service girl, but a war hero, a female equivalent of Superman. She fought with German spies and escaped captivity by the evil Japanese. With her long legs, fiery red hair and rather evident cleavage, she became the darling of men in the armed forces. Servicemen idolised her, and painted images of her on bomber planes and tanks. Many wrote to Kate O’Brien and received in return an original watercolour painting depicting Wanda. These servicemen often pinned up the painting in their lodgings. Her skimpy clothing – shredded by so many close escapes of course – only added to her charisma. But women and children also idolised her, and voted her more popular than the American invention, Superman.<sup>5</sup> She was the first *Superwoman*, a fantasy that resonated with soldiers and civilians alike.<sup>6</sup>

### USING HISTORICAL SOURCES AS EVIDENCE 4.3

1. In Source 4.13, what techniques has the artist used to represent the Germans looking threatening and brutal?
2. What main personal qualities does Wanda display in her adventures?
3. Why might these qualities have appeared very unusual in a woman to people in the 1940s?
4. How do we know that Wanda became a cult figure for adults, and especially our armed forces, during the war?

## 4.3 Experiences of enemy aliens on the home front

### INQUIRY QUESTION

To what extent was the internment of people of foreign background a necessary precaution in a time of war?

In wartime, governments usually conduct surveillance of the home front to identify any persons conducting espionage (spying to give strategic information to the enemy) or sabotage (damaging important equipment, weapons or factories). It is assumed that people from countries that have become enemies in warfare might still have loyalties to their place of origin.

A month after the declaration of war against Germany, the Menzies Government passed the *National Security Act, 1939* (Cth). Despite Prime Minister Menzies’ assurances, historian David Henderson believes that, in reality, the Act repeated old failures.

#### Source 4.14

What [Maurice] Blackburn wanted to see in the National Security legislation were safeguards against arbitrary action. But there were none. The government would be able to pass laws as it liked ... In the Senate the vote went 17 to 16 and few who looked at it could fail to notice in the National Security Act the ghosts of the War Precautions Act of the previous war. In

the midst of the Commonwealth Government's preparation for a global war, it seemed as if all its prejudices and idiosyncrasies were on display. The National Security Act authorised the government to regulate any number of aspects of Australian life that usually went unregulated. There were punitive controls over pricing and interest rates and regulations that restricted the rights to procession and assembly, which affected everyone equally. Other regulations were directed just at aliens. There were regulations forbidding aliens from working in shipping, from owning motorcars, firearms, cameras and radios (Regulation 22). There were regulations forbidding an alien to change his or her place of abode without notifying the appropriate authorities (Regulation 16) and from changing his or her name (Regulation 26) to any other name than was known at the outbreak of the War. More significantly, there were regulations providing for the internment of persons who were considered a threat to public safety and who could be detained 'in such a place, under such conditions and for such a period as the Minister or person so authorised determines' (Regulation 20).

David Henderson, *Nazis in Our Midst: German-Australians, Internment and the Second World War*, Melbourne: Australian Scholarly Publishing, 2016, pp. 80–81.

Historian Kate Darian-Smith also believes the Act exceeded the genuine security needs, and that it had a hidden intention.

The war demanded a **conformist** definition of Anglo-Australian society, and patriotism implied that digressions [diversions] from political, religious and social **norms** were disloyal. Persons of non-British origin, particularly those from countries with which Australia was at war, were regarded with suspicion, and became subject to state control. The detection of such 'enemies' within society had an important function for civilian morale, at least in the initial stage of the war, by seeming to reduce Australia's isolation from the military front, by convincing the population that threat was immediate, even if hidden, and by creating a climate of fear. For instance, the press dramatically reported escapes from internment camps with headlines such as 'Two More Nazis Caught'. The enormous powers contained in the War Book provided the machinery for control, and legitimized [made legal] this social and legal expression of established prejudices towards non-British people, and enabled the Federal Government to exercise a form of political oppression.

Kate Darian-Smith, *On the Home Front: Melbourne in Wartime, 1939–1945*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990, p. 27.



↑ **Source 4.15** Maurice Blackburn

**Maurice Blackburn** a lawyer who founded the law firm Maurice Blackburn and Company. He was a state and, later, a federal politician. He was deeply committed to defending civil liberties.

#### **Source 4.16**

**conformist** an expectation that individuals will support and obey the dominant values of a society

**norms** the dominant political and social values of the majority of people in a nation

## USING HISTORICAL SOURCES AS EVIDENCE 4.4

1. What did Maurice Blackburn (see Source 4.14) want as part of the National Security Act?
2. What is David Henderson's assessment (see Source 4.14) of the National Security Act?
3. Besides security concerns, what other 'important function' does Darian-Smith (see Source 4.16) detect in the National Security regulations?
4. Both Henderson and Darian-Smith referred to 'prejudices'. To what were they referring?
5. Do you believe that such prejudices still exist in today's Australia, which is a more multicultural society?

Of course, there were genuine security concerns, which Darian-Smith admits. She points out that Italian Embassy officials in Melbourne did communicate information to the German Embassy for Hitler's use, and that since 1933 the German Consul Dr Johannes Becker sponsored an Australian Nazi Party. David Henderson has also written about Nazi sympathisers and German spies in Australia.<sup>7</sup>

The fear induced by war led the Australian Government to round up and intern Australian residents of foreign background, many of whom posed no real threat.

**conscientious objectors** like pacifists, conscientious objectors refused to fight the enemy on the grounds that physical violence was not moral

Other groups were also targeted for their political or religious beliefs and their activities banned. The Communist Party of Australia, with 5000 members, obeyed instructions from Moscow to obstruct Australia's war effort, and was duly banned. This ban was lifted, however, after June 1941, when Russia joined the Allies after having been invaded by Germany. The Jehovah's Witnesses, a religious group, were **conscientious objectors** whose conscience forbade them from fighting or even working in war industries. Their group was also banned.

At its peak, the home front became a prison for some 7000 Australian citizens. Australia also received a further 8000 British citizens and residents who had been arrested and deported on the grounds that their foreign birth made them 'suspicious', and 17 000 Italian prisoners-of-war captured in North Africa.<sup>8</sup> The Army ran the camps, and initially adapted existing buildings, such as the jail at Berrima (New South Wales), or Army barracks, such as those at Keswick (South Australia). Later, as the numbers grew, the Government built new camps in places such as Tatura (Victoria) and Hay and Cowra (New South Wales).<sup>9</sup> The people targeted for internment were the Italians, Germans and Japanese.

## Australian suspicion of Italian migrants

**fascism** an extreme right-wing ideology, as practiced by Hitler and Mussolini, by which the dictator exerts complete control over their people, and eliminates all other political opinion

Italians in Australia were generally treated with suspicion in the inter-war period. In the 1930s, Benito Mussolini, Italy's **fascist** leader, allied himself with Hitler's Germany, giving Australians more reason to see them as not part of the Australian nation. Suspicions intensified when some Italians, resident in Australia, established pro-Mussolini fascist organisations, such as the National Fascist Party, in Melbourne. Other Italians, however, had also formed anti-fascist parties.



↑ **Source 4.17** Cowra prisoner-of-war camp, 1944



↑ **Source 4.18** Australian Italians being marched into a prisoner-of-war camp

Regrettably, Italian restaurants and other businesses in Carlton, Fitzroy and Brunswick were targeted by Anglo-Australian crowds and shop fronts were smashed, irrespective of the Italian owner's political loyalties. One Italian shopkeeper in Bourke Street, Melbourne, voiced his disbelief and dismay when the police did nothing.

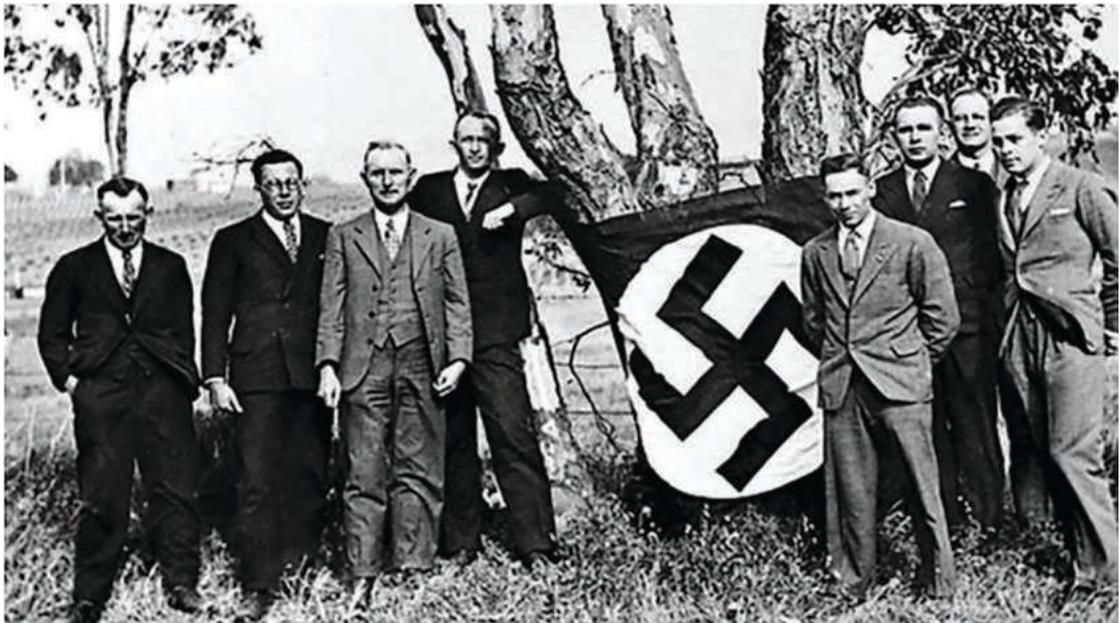
After Italy entered the war in June 1940, the Australian Government quickly interned large numbers of Italians. By August 1942, 2000 Italians were in prison camps. After that, numbers declined, partly because the Government did not wish to pay the costs of their internment, partly because the Italians were important to food production and, finally, because Italy surrendered in 1943.

Statistically, Darian-Smith found that Victoria did not have the greatest number of internments. In Victoria, from a total of 343 male Italian 'aliens', only 2.9 per cent were interned, as opposed to 11.7 per cent in New South Wales and 43.1 per cent in Queensland.<sup>10</sup> She believes that this was because Italians were some of the main market gardeners crucial to food production. In addition, the Catholic Archbishop Daniel Mannix had strongly warned that persecution might make Italians turn to Communism.

### Australian suspicion of Germans

Historian Klaus Neumann was commissioned by the National Archives of Australia to explore official records to uncover stories of victims of government policy who suffered injustice under the National Security Act.<sup>11</sup> Neumann had found from earlier research based on interviews, that some Germans were passionately opposed to Hitler and Nazism, but imprisoned anyway.

Helmut Neustaedter was a typical victim of this harsh surveillance. German by birth, but Jewish by faith, Neustaedter fled Germany, hating Nazism. He reached Singapore, where British officials interned him because he was German. He was moved to Sydney in September 1940.



↑ **Source 4.19** Nazi party members in Australia in the 1930s



↑ **Source 4.20** Exterior of Huts, Tatura Internment Camp, Karl Muffler, 1942



↑ **Source 4.21** A group of Australian-German internees at the Tatura prisoner-of-war camp, 16 March 1945

**refugees** the 1951 United Nations definition of 'refugee' states that this is a person who has been forced to flee their own country, due to a reasonable fear that they might suffer attack, injury or death due to their political beliefs, race, religion or sex

Neustaedter and his fellow refugees were herded onto a train, guarded by Australian troops with loaded rifles and fixed bayonets, and taken to Shepparton in central Victoria, then to a camp at Tatura. The assumption by authorities that German = Nazi revealed the simplistic and dangerous lack of understanding of many in Anglo-Australian society. The Australian Government finally corrected this misunderstanding in February 1942, recognising German Jews as **refugees**, and releasing them from internment. Neustaedter immediately joined the Australian Army.<sup>12</sup> Neumann's book, *In the Interest of National Safety* (2006) contains 10 detailed case studies of internees. He found most were men, and that the majority were of German, Austrian or Italian background. He admits that a small minority supported

Hitler's Nazism and Mussolini's fascism, but insists that most were victims escaping these terrible regimes. Those who were Jewish had absolutely no sympathy for Nazism. Most internees were released well before 1945, and the majority stayed in Australia, achieving their aim of living in a relatively safe society.

### A Japanese enemy alien



↑ **Source 4.22** Two Japanese internees at Barmera (South Australia) are set to work with a cross-cut saw to cut firewood, March 1943

When the Japanese attacked the American naval base of Pearl Harbor, all Japanese citizens in Australia automatically became enemy aliens, no matter what their opinions. Masuko Kathleen Murakami was one innocent and loyal Australian who was arrested. She recalled:

I took my son to my mum's house and saw two soldiers standing in front of the house. They said 'What are you doing? You are not supposed to be out. You are not allowed in.' Back at home there were also two soldiers. They said, 'You are under arrest. This is for your protection.' Her greatest grief was that her private property was not respected, and her home was ransacked: 'They took us to Adelaide River on a big Army truck and while we were there well all the houses been looted and my father's camera – they were all gone, and when I came back all my Japanese kimono and all the things I treasured so much were gone.'

Source 4.23

Klaus Neumann, *In the Interest of National Security: Civilian Internment in Australia in World War II*, Canberra: National Archives of Australia, 2006, p. 29.

## An Italian enemy alien

Neumann tells the tragic story of Francesco Fantin, an Italian, who died in internment. Fantin was in the Loveday Prison Camp, South Australia, where the Italians loyal to the fascist dictator Mussolini were interned. Fantin was not one of them and indeed passionately opposed fascism. On 17 August 1942, he recorded that he had been threatened by some Italian prisoners who demanded that he swear loyalty to Mussolini, or they would kill him. In fear, he wrote: 'Believe me that today again I must thank the soldiers who guard us. Were it not for them the fascist criminals would cause a lot of grief.'

The tragedy of his story is that Fantin was deeply loyal to Australia, and totally opposed to its enemies. He wrote from the Loveday camp:

I have but few friends with whom I can communicate. Here I have many enemies around me. When I hear them talking against the Australian people and all who are fighting fascism, you will understand the reaction to my feelings. At time, tears fall from my eyes and in so doing give me a feeling of relief. Sometimes I feel deeply down-hearted, a feeling I have never experienced during the previous years of my life. It is not because I am enclosed in this camp, for towards the Australian people, I have no bitter feeling, rather, I feel affectionately towards them. It is against these fascists and all Italians who have lost their sense of reasoning whom I despise and feel a sense of hatred.' He concluded: 'I would like to use all my physical strength to help the Australian people to victory.'

Source 4.24

Klaus Neumann, *In the Interest of National Security: Civilian Internment in Australia in World War II*, Canberra: National Archives of Australia, 2006, pp. 59–61.



↑ **Source 4.25** Portrait of Francesco Fantin as a young man, c. 1920

Fantin was murdered on 16 November 1942. Casotti, a fascist, admitted he pushed Fantin, who fell backwards onto a wooden pole supporting a tap and died. However, other prisoners claimed Casotti had smashed the back of Fantin's skull open with a pole. Casotti was sentenced to two years imprisonment.<sup>13</sup>

## 4.4 Experiences of Indigenous peoples on the home front

### INQUIRY QUESTION

To what extent did World War II allow Indigenous peoples to gain greater recognition, respect and, ultimately, full citizenship?

→ **Source 4.26** An Aboriginal man known as Johnny was one of many people who used their bush skills to rescue downed pilots. Johnny saw an American plane go down on a small island near the coast of Darwin, rescued him and brought him back to safety. This was one of the most important services done by Aboriginal Australians: pilots were valuable personnel – requiring enormous training – and had to be rescued at all costs.



The war was a transforming experience for many Indigenous people.

Emergencies such as wars often give people new experiences and opportunities. These in turn work to change traditional attitudes and, sometimes, to free people from old restrictions.

Historian Samuel Furphy has explored why this was particularly true of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders in Australia during World War II.

The Second World War had a profound impact on Indigenous Australians. Not only was the military participation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders more extensive than in the First World War, but the closeness of the Pacific theatre of war, and the greater military presence in Australia that flowed from this, resulted in a more transformative home front experience.

Source 4.27

Samuel Furphy, 'The Second World War Home Front', in Joan Beaumont and Allison Cadzow, *Serving Our Country: Indigenous Australians, War, Defence and Citizenship*, Sydney: NewSouth, 2018, p. 176.

Furphy identifies five main reasons for this transformation:

1. The war created greater opportunities for employment, notably in farming and weapons making. Existing racist objections to their employment were overcome by the urgent demands of war production.
2. This war ended the distinction between the 'war front' and the 'home front', and directly affected the lives of Indigenous peoples.
3. The interaction between Indigenous people and visiting African-American soldiers was transforming, revealing Americans of colour to be people who were professionally trained, well-paid and vocal in challenging racism.
4. Indigenous women benefited from increased participation in both paid employment and in voluntary work, demonstrating to all their capacity for productive labour.
5. Japanese bombing raids in North Australia caused mission stations to close, enabling some Indigenous people to return to Country, and resume traditional beliefs and practices.

### New employment opportunities for Indigenous people

In Source 4.28, historian Richard Broome explains how Indigenous people, who worked on northern cattle stations for no payment except poor housing and rations, benefited from the war.

The Japanese military incursions into Australia's northern border zones in the early 1940s fractured the colonial world of the North. The Australian Army brought new men and new ideas to the North and they formed different relations with the thousand or so Aboriginal labourers and domestic workers in Army camps and defence construction projects. The workers received a cash wage of 10 pence per day and they and their dependants received full Army rations. Their work was praised and they mixed well with the regular troops, although some gambled their newfound cash. Their wages profoundly impacted on the pastoral industry.

Source 4.28

... Continued

*Continued...*

Encouraged by the Army's positive reports about Aboriginal workers, the Northern Territory administration investigated and held a conference on wages with pastoral representatives in January 1947. This meeting recommended a wage scale of between 12/6 and 20 shillings a week. This was not acted on, and the recommendation still did not amount to a wage equal to white wages; but change was rendered inevitable by the War.

Richard Broome, *Aboriginal Australians: A History since 1788*,  
Sydney: Allen & Unwin, 2019, p. 141



↑ **Source 4.29** Indigenous people also served in important auxiliary services such as cutting firewood. Here, three Aboriginal men use a belt-driven circular saw to cut up tree trunks. This employment brought many Indigenous people a welcome income and a greater degree of respect than they usually enjoyed in peacetime.

Historian Claire Phelps also discovered significant benefits to Aboriginal people of the North in doing Army work.

**Source 4.30**

Aborigines [...] contributed heavily to local industry during the war years, backfilling the manpower shortage caused by the enlistment of many workers. As the population of the Northern Territory increased, the AIF became heavily dependent on the Aboriginal labour contribution to the war effort. During this time, living and employment conditions for Aborigines increased greatly as they received adequate housing, fixed working hours, sufficient rations and access to medical treatment – none of which had been received under the pastoralist employment scheme of

the early 1900s. The Army was considered to be a benevolent employer, and the success of employment in the AIF later helped to change attitudes towards Aborigines as employees. VJ White, Director of Native Affairs in the Northern Territory, commented on the new positive view towards Aboriginal workers in 1943: 'The contribution to the war effort by the Northern Territory native is considerable and the demand for manpower has converted him into an economic asset, of real worth to the community ... conditions prevailing at present have enabled the native to emerge from the obscurity in which he hitherto has been destined to work'.

Claire Phelps, *Aboriginal Contribution to Australian War Efforts: Proving Their Citizenship?* *Modern History Initiates*, vol. 2, no. 1, April 2014, p. 87–88.

Although there were significant benefits to Indigenous people, and life-changing experiences, it must be emphasised that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples did not gain civil rights for another 20 years. However, the changing attitudes in society was a first step towards these civil rights.

Other opportunities came as people moved to the cities to work in munitions factories. Indigenous Army recruits received equal pay and treatment, as did some defence industries, bringing economic benefits through better pay and more continuous work.

Indigenous people continued to experience racial discrimination as many employers and recruiters prejudged them according to racist stereotyping as 'lazy' and 'unreliable'. In some factories, white workers refused to work with Indigenous people, and some trade unions officials refused to enrol them as unionists.

### Indigenous peoples' responses

Indigenous Australians showed themselves generally prepared to assist the war effort in the ways open to them. Some 3000 Indigenous men joined the armed forces, and thousands more worked in war industries, but their efforts were not always welcomed. For example, two Aboriginal women were evacuated from Darwin to Melbourne, where they worked as domestics. They then volunteered for munitions work, but were rejected because the Government had no need for 'black labour'. The case outraged many members of the public and Indigenous people.



↑ **Source 4.31** The Australian Government was initially unwilling to offer employment to Indigenous people, but the 1942–43 war emergency forced authorities to accept them into both military and auxiliary roles. For this Aboriginal woman, who is looking at her ration book, the war probably meant new employment and income opportunities.

One Aboriginal soldier wrote:

**Source 4.32**

We as Aboriginals, who have our country's interest at heart, and are prepared to pay the supreme sacrifice if need be, feel this stigma [humiliation, prejudice] very keenly.

Kate Darian-Smith, *On the Home Front: Melbourne in Wartime, 1939–1945*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990, pp. 76–7.

Indigenous people who moved to cities for war work developed new community links and strengthened their push for civil rights. For instance, the Aboriginal population of Fitzroy increased five-fold from 100 to 500 during the war. As Richard Broome has shown, it became a seedbed for Aboriginal activism demanding civil rights and a better life.<sup>14</sup> In Fitzroy, one important influence was Douglas (later Sir) Nicholls, an Aboriginal serviceman, former Fitzroy VFL footballer and then Church of Christ pastor, who established the Gore Street Chapel in 1943.

In Source 4.33, Richard Broome explains the influence of the Gore Street Chapel.

**Source 4.33**

Before long his Sunday congregation had risen to eighty, who enjoyed his quietly persuasive preaching and the inspiring gospel singing. Not all of the community attended, some going to the Fitzroy Anglican Church, the Bethesda Mission, or not attending any church. Others went to Gore Street for the social life, as Albert Mullett recalled: 'there was always a good feed and time to catch up with 'rellos' and listen to a vision for the future by our elders'. Gore Street probably influenced more than half the community in some way. It became an alternate symbol for whites of the Melbourne community, to counteract the dissolute, **vagabond** image. It also provided role models for Aboriginal people, as Nicholls invited visiting Black American entertainers to his church, including Harry Belafonte and Winifred Atwell. The church lasted for 27 years, although it was in Fitzroy Street in its latter years.

Richard Broome, *Aboriginal Victorians: A History Since 1800*. Sydney: Allen & Unwin, 2005, p. 290–1.

Sir Doug Nicholls was also a political leader, taking over William Cooper's Australian Aborigines' League, on Cooper's death in 1941.<sup>15</sup>

## FOCUS QUESTIONS 4.2

1. List the ways in which Indigenous people participated in the war effort.
2. Explain how the war brought benefits to Indigenous Australians on the home front.
3. Analyse how the war lessened discrimination.
4. What forms of racial prejudice still remained in home front Australia?
5. Apart from these short-term benefits, what was the most important gain Indigenous Australians hoped to make, but failed to achieve?

## Relocation and internment

The war had some negative effects on Indigenous people. Aboriginal people living on the coast were removed to camps further inland, allegedly for their safety. The Australian Army worried that, if the Japanese invaded, Aboriginal people would assist them. Some Aboriginal people, especially women who had Japanese husbands, were interned in prison camps as enemy aliens.

Indigenous people also experienced other subtle changes. Samuel Furphy finds that the needs of war resulted in the construction of a reliable road from Darwin to Alice Springs. At Alice Springs, Indigenous people – who had always outnumbered whites – now found themselves outnumbered for the first time, as the white population rose from a mere 400 to 6000. As a result, local Indigenous people now felt the force of racial **segregation** and prejudice.

**segregation** the process of making a certain person or group live apart from the rest of the community

## Torres Strait Islander people



↑ **Source 4.34** A squad of the Torres Strait Light Infantry Battalion stands on parade at their base on Thursday Island in 1945. The volunteering rate among these people was exceptionally high. The rifles they carry are old Lee Enfield 303 rifles from World War I, which were no match for Japanese machine guns.

Indigenous men on Thursday Island joined the Torres Strait Light Infantry Battalion for local defence. After Japan's entry into the war, the Battalion swelled to 830 men; almost every single eligible islander man had volunteered.

However, Torres Strait Islander women were evacuated to Aboriginal settlements in Queensland, such as Cherbourg. These women experienced the racist attitudes of reserve managers and people in the local towns. Women on outlying islands were not evacuated to Australia, but had to cope without their men, often dodging machine-gun bullets from Japanese fighter planes. Some Torres Strait Islander women who had Japanese partners (many of them working in the pearl

trade) suffered when their men were interned in prison camps, leaving the women to fend for their families alone. In some cases, these families were subjected to suspicion and surveillance.<sup>16</sup>

## The end of the war

On 8 May 1945, Germany's final surrender signaled the end of World War II in the European theatre of war. In Australia, as in Europe, vast crowds gathered to celebrate the end of the conflict; newspapers announced 'Victory in Europe', which was soon shortened to V-E Day. On 2 September 1945, Japanese officials signed the documents of surrender, bringing the war in the Pacific to an end. This came to be known as Victory Over Japan Day, soon shortened to V-J Day. A total of 75 million people had died in the conflict; some 20 million were soldiers, but another 40 million were civilians. After the war, fearing that Australia might still be invaded again, the Government adopted a 'Populate or perish' policy, and for the first time permitted non-British migrants to come here, which they did by the thousand.

### 4.5 Chapter summary

Here are some dot-points for you to consider and add to:

#### Continuity and change

- The war caused significant changes in Australia.
- It intensified the industrial development of the country.
- It prompted the creation of a larger national military force during peace time.
- It confirmed Australia's diplomatic and military alliance with the United States.
- It opened up Australian society to international influences.
- After the war, Australia adopted a policy encouraging migration of people from Europe to help boost the population of the nation and protect it from foreign invasion.

### 4.6 End-of-chapter activities

#### Evaluating the historical significance of ideas and events

##### Learning to identify and state the significance of a key event: the annotated timeline

In the following table, demonstrate that you can briefly state what happened in a given event, and identify its significance in terms of the overall home front experience.

Date	Event	What happened?	What was its significance to Australia?
9 September 1939	The National Security Act is passed	It empowered the Federal Government to take emergency measures to guarantee Australia's security on the home front.	The Federal Government assumed an exceptional amount of power in order to control the civilian population

Date	Event	What happened?	What was its significance to Australia?
10 June 1940	Italy enters the war on the side of Nazi Germany		
February 1941	The Women's Auxiliary Australian Air Force is founded		
June 1941	Australia first allows women to work in government-run factories		
January 1942	The Manpower Directorate is established		
February 1942	The Federal Government releases German Jews from its prisoner-of-war camps		
March 1942	The Federal Government refuses Constance Duncan's suggestion of a childcare system		
16 November 1942	Murder of the Italian citizen Fantin by fascists in a prisoner-of-war camp		
February 1943	Invention of the cartoon character Wanda the War Girl		
19 August 1944	Prime Minister Curtin is unsuccessful in a referendum to massively increase federal powers		
9 May 1945	Prime Minister Chifley announces the end of the war in Europe		

## Evaluating historical significance

### What were the political, economic, social and military effects of World War II on Australia?

Instruction: Create a mind map in your exercise book or computer. Using the list of terms below, make study notes about the political, social, economic and military impacts of World War II on Australia.

American soldiers  
Japanese mini-submarines  
Darwin/Broome/Townsville  
militarised Japan  
Brisbane Line  
Images of modern evil  
Fall of Singapore  
oversexed and overpaid  
Prime Minister John Curtin  
Labor Party  
Department of Home Security  
Dedmanism  
rationing  
'snowdropping'  
Maribyrnong Munitions Factory  
Citizen Military Force  
Volunteer Defence Corps  
Battle for Australia  
General Douglas MacArthur  
South-West Pacific Area  
Ferry Kuttabul  
Country Women's Association  
air-raid shelters  
brownout  
conscription for overseas service  
black market  
Victory Girls  
Edward Leonski  
rationing  
austerity  
lend-lease  
panic buying  
hoarding  
Victory Suit  
'irresponsibles'  
propaganda  
censorship  
radios

## What were the experiences of social groups in Australia during World War II?

Instruction: Create a mind map in your exercise book or computer. Using the list of terms below, make study notes about the political, social, economic and military impacts of World War II on Australia.

home front  
war front  
women's history  
feminist history  
agency  
Australian Army Medical Women's Service  
Women's Auxiliary Australian Air Force  
emancipation auxiliary services  
propaganda  
extensive employment of women  
Pacific region  
Manpower Directorate  
nationwide childcare scheme  
munitions  
Commonwealth Explosives Factory  
Wirraway planes  
trade unions  
Australian Army Nursing Service  
Women's Royal Australian Navy Service  
Wanda the War Girl  
fascism  
internment  
Communist Party  
Nazis among us  
enemy aliens  
espionage  
sabotage  
prisoner-of-war camps  
National Security Act  
German Jews  
Francesco Fantin  
bush skills  
farming  
weapons making  
Aboriginal civil rights  
relocation  
Australian Aboriginal League  
Sir Doug Nicholls  
Bethesda Mission

## What were the positive and negative impacts of World War II on social groups in Australia?

### Key impacts of World War II on Australian women

Positive effects

.....  
.....  
.....  
.....

Negative effects

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.....  
.....  
.....

### Key impacts of World War II on Indigenous Australians

Positive effects

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.....  
.....  
.....

Negative effects

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.....  
.....  
.....

### Key impacts of World War II on enemy aliens

Positive effects

.....  
.....  
.....  
.....

Negative effects

.....  
.....  
.....  
.....

1. List and then rank the impacts of World War II on home front groups in Australian society.
2. What were the gains made by women in terms of war service and industrial employment and what were the limits to these gains?
3. To what extent were the short-term benefits experienced by Indigenous people during World War II translated into long-term benefits?
4. What were the impacts of government security policies on Australians who were reclassified as enemy aliens?
5. Debrief as a class. Having listened to your classmates' arguments and rankings, would you change yours? If so, which ones and why?

### Consolidating your understanding

Complete the following questions to help revise the key events ideas perspectives and experiences that shaped the home front experience in Australia between 1939 and 1950.

1. In what way did the nature of the home in World War II differ fundamentally from that of the Australian home front in 1914–18?
2. Why would involvement in the auxiliary services on the home front have been a transforming experience for many Australian women?

3. Why does Patsy Adam-Smith believe that World War II actually freed many women from ‘the tyranny of home family and conventional society’?
4. Why was the Australian Government obliged to give into women’s demands for greater participation in the workplace and in the armed forces?
5. What was the main trigger for Prime Minister John Curtin’s decision to announce the greater participation of women in the industrial workplace?
6. Did the Australian Government’s policies and attitudes effectively maximise the use of women’s labour in the industrial economy?
7. What were the conditions and risks of work in the munitions sector?
8. For what reason did the trade unions resist the entry of women into the workplace?
9. What was the nature and role of the auxiliary units set up during the war?
10. To what extent can we justify the treatment of enemy aliens in Australia during World War II?

### Constructing an argument: essay writing

1. ‘The war emergency forced the Australian Government to take the justified precaution of imprisoning those it defined as enemy aliens.’ To what extent do you agree with this statement?
2. What was the Federal Government’s intention in passing the National Security Act? What were the legal objections made to its strict terms?
3. To what extent did Indigenous people benefit from positive experiences and new opportunities during World War II?

### Extension reading

Department of Veterans’ Affairs, *Australia’s Home Front 1939–1945: Australians in the Pacific War*, Canberra: Department of Veterans’ Affairs, 2006.

This government publication is a superlative collection of full-page photographs showing different aspects of the home front accompanied by detailed and informative captions. The selection is broad and includes a number of photographs that are not commonly seen, most especially of the roles of women and of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders on the home front.

Klaus Neumann, *In the Interests of National Security*, Canberra: National Archives of Australia, 2006.

This short but authoritative study will be a powerful reference for the teacher but also accessible to the senior secondary student. Klaus Neumann, renowned for his meticulous academic research and his superbly clear writing, has gone deeply into the National Archives of Australia in Canberra. He illustrates the problem of internment (imprisonment) by relaying some heart-rending personal stories, including those of German Jews who had fled Hitler’s Holocaust to find safety in Australia, only to be locked up as Nazi supporters.

Michael McKernan, *The Strength of a Nation Six years of Australians fighting for the nation and defending the homefront in World War II*, Allen & Unwin, 2008.

This accessible read gives students a lot of insights into both Australia’s roles in battle in World War II and on the homefront.

# CHAPTER 5

## Summary of Area of Study 1: The Australian home front in the world wars



**SUCH A SIMPLE QUESTION.**

## 5.1 Introduction

This chapter will help you revise for your assessment tasks or the exam. There are a number of important questions to ask yourself about this Area of Study. Summary points focused on the various continuities and changes in Australian society are provided. Use the information to help answer the essay question at the end of the chapter.

### ASKING HISTORICAL QUESTIONS

Over the period of time covered in this section (1914–50), how has Australia's foreign policy and military activity continued or changed in response to world events?

#### Continuities

- Because Australia's population and military capacities are relatively small by world standards, its involvement in war has been in alliance with other countries, not by itself.
- Throughout World War I and the inter-war years (1918–39), Australia's foreign policy was firmly aligned with Britain, and remained so in the first years of World War II.
- Over the same period of time, Australia's sense of national identity was strongly linked to our pride in being a part of the British Empire (later becoming known as the Commonwealth).
- Australia also remained during this time (and up to the present day) a constitutional monarchy: our head of state is the British queen or king.
- The issue of military conscription has consistently been a divisive one, specifically over the question of whether people can be conscripted to fight abroad in war. Even when this was modified during World War II, the definition of 'overseas service' remained carefully delimited.

#### Changes

- The greatest re-alignment in Australia's foreign policy in this period was its modification of its military alliance with Britain and the development of a new defensive alliance with the United States.
- This re-alignment was triggered by the unexpected Japanese capture of the British military fortress on Singapore in 1942, and by Britain's subsequent announcement that it was not able to send troops to defend Australia and the Pacific region.
- Subsequently, Australia shared the United States' common concern to defeat Japan's invasion of the Pacific Region. Australia provided troops and a base from which US forces could strike the enemy. Since then, Australian troops have fought beside US forces in every major conflict of the twentieth century, thus becoming a major continuity.<sup>1</sup>
- Another post-1945 major defensive position has been Australia's change of mind regarding its immigration policy.
- As early as 1944, Prime Minister Curtin reflected that Australia needed a bigger population to defend itself, and proposed the idea of a Department of Immigration.
- Immigration Minister Arthur Calwell said 'If Australians have learned one lesson from the Pacific war ... it is surely that we cannot continue to hold our island continent for ourselves and our descendants unless we greatly increase our numbers ... much development and settlement have yet to be undertaken. Our need to undertake it is urgent and imperative if we are to survive.'<sup>2</sup>

- Fearing that Australia might still be invaded again, the Government adopted a ‘Populate or perish’ policy, and for the first time permitted non-British migrants to come here.
- Between 1945 and 1965, two million immigrants arrived in Australia. While Britain had an assisted passage agreement with Australia, other European countries did too. The first to join were the Baltic states of Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania.
- The arrival of people from a range of European nations – bringing with them new languages, cultures and beliefs – would transform the previously Anglo-Saxon monoculture forever.

↓ **Source 5.1** This photograph captures a force that would transform Australian society forever: the arrival of millions of migrants.



### ASKING HISTORICAL QUESTIONS

What has been the impact of war on the political, social and economic cohesion of Australia?

## The impact of war on the political, social and economic cohesion of Australia: World War I

- During World War I, Australia began with a high degree of cohesion, in the form of a pride in being a part of the British Empire and fighting alongside its forces. This sense of 'Britishness' was a major part of our national identity.
- As the war continued much longer than expected, another form of cohesion was the willingness of Australian civilians to enter the voluntary aid organisations and, to a lesser degree, some white collar jobs.
- One major form of cohesion was the willingness of women to volunteer for support services (such as the Red Cross).
- Another notable form of cohesion was the willingness of Indigenous Australians to volunteer for the armed forces.
- However, World War I also caused the greatest loss of cohesion when the heavy demands of the conflict obliged Australia to consider conscripting men for war service overseas.
- The existing arrangement was that men could be conscripted into the armed forces, but only for service in Australia. The resulting debate became a divisive conflict, pitting approximately one-half of the voting population against the other.
- This was a significant change for Australian society, which had never witnessed such a bitter debate. There was also a continuity in the fact that both referenda failed, but only by a small majority against conscription. This was also a continuity in the sense that, historically, referenda in Australia have rarely been passed.

## The impact of war on the political, social and economic cohesion of Australia: World War II

- On a general level, historians feel that the Australian nation enjoyed a much higher level of cohesion during World War II than in World War I, and that citizen participation and cooperation stayed at a high level in this later war.
- One reason for this was the lack of a divisive conscription debate. Prime Minister Curtin even successfully introduced a carefully limited program of conscription for overseas service in 1943.
- Another powerful unifying force was that Australia came under direct attack, and credibly expected a Japanese invasion.
- Political cohesion was strengthened because the Federal Government was quite stable after 1941. Prime Minister Curtin, in particular, made effective use of radio broadcasts and propaganda posters to urge people to assist in the war effort.
- Social cohesion was generally strong, because people felt they were all working together to face a national emergency.
- Social cohesion was threatened by suspicions against people from countries that were now seen as enemies (Germany, Austria, Italy, Japan).
- Social cohesion was threatened by internment of 12 000 'enemy aliens', which made them appear to be criminals in prisons.
- Social cohesion was affected by rationing and food shortages, especially when some people could buy scarce goods on the illegal 'Black Market'.
- Social cohesion was affected to some degree by the overwhelming presence and wealth of US troops (although for others, this presented a real opportunity to gain financially).
- Economic cohesion was threatened by miner and wharfie strikes early in the war (1940–41) and then again in 1944–45.
- Economic cohesion was affected because of a change in the Federal Government's view of the labour movement, with the belief that strikes were unpatriotic in a time of war.

## ASKING HISTORICAL QUESTIONS

To what extent did the roles of women in Australian society change as a result of war?

In the following responses, we will focus on social attitudes towards women.

### The extent that the roles of women in Australian society changed as a result of World War I

- At the outbreak of war in 1914, social attitudes in Australia did not favour allowing women into the workplace.
- Those who did factory work were mainly employed in clothing production, textiles or food production.
- Unlike Britain, Australia did not yet have a large-scale munitions industry, and so Australian women could not make the same contribution as British women did.
- The main employment available to Australian women was as nurses.
- Women nonetheless started creating voluntary organisations to express their active support for the war.
- Volunteer work tended to be restricted to middle-class women who enjoyed access to income. Working-class women were less likely to be able to afford unpaid volunteer work.
- Evidence for this is that there were twenty-five Red Cross branches in Sydney, but only two were in working-class suburbs. Other voluntary organisations included the War Chest and The Australian Comforts Fund.
- Women successfully created a new industry in the Australian economy: the making (by voluntary labour) of comforting gifts for the troops on the war front. Although the Australian Imperial Force (AIF) provided its troops with accommodation, meals and uniforms, there was a desperate need for more humble, comfortable forms of clothing, such as socks, scarves and gloves. In addition, food items (such as plum puddings) were welcomed by the troops who otherwise lived on poor-quality Army rations.
- Other humble comforts, such as warm woollen socks, were actually crucial in helping prevent men suffer from trench foot, a serious, widespread disease caused by standing in water or wet clothes for too long.
- These aid groups merged in 1916 to form the massive Australian Comforts Fund. It is estimated that Australian women worked approximately 10 million hours of unpaid labour between 1914 and 1918.
- The largest of these organisations was the Red Cross, founded just days after the declaration of war. It is a measure of sexist attitudes that many of the top positions in management were still occupied by men.
- The members initially believed that they should learn first aid techniques. They then discovered that items of clothing, ranging from socks to shirts, were desperately needed.
- Women also undertook an impressive spectrum of other activities to raise money for the war effort, such as holding sales and fairs, selling patriotic souvenirs (such as badges) and sending money to homeless civilians in European cities devastated by war.
- Historian Michael McKernan concludes that, by the end of the war, Australian women had not successfully overcome sex-based prejudices that limited their actions.
- He notes, however, that women did demonstrate – to themselves and to men – that they could organise and drive major organisations and, in doing so, acquire significant entrepreneurial skills. This was a beginning, which would resume with far greater scope and success in the ensuing world war.

- Historian's view:

Australian women, in their unpaid work, learned that they could organise and manage. [...] The war work performed by women changed [perceptions], giving women fresh confidence in their abilities. Women were delighted to discover the new opportunities, delighted to be able to demonstrate that they, too, had been tested and not found wanting.<sup>3</sup>

### The extent that the roles of women in Australian society changed as a result of World War II

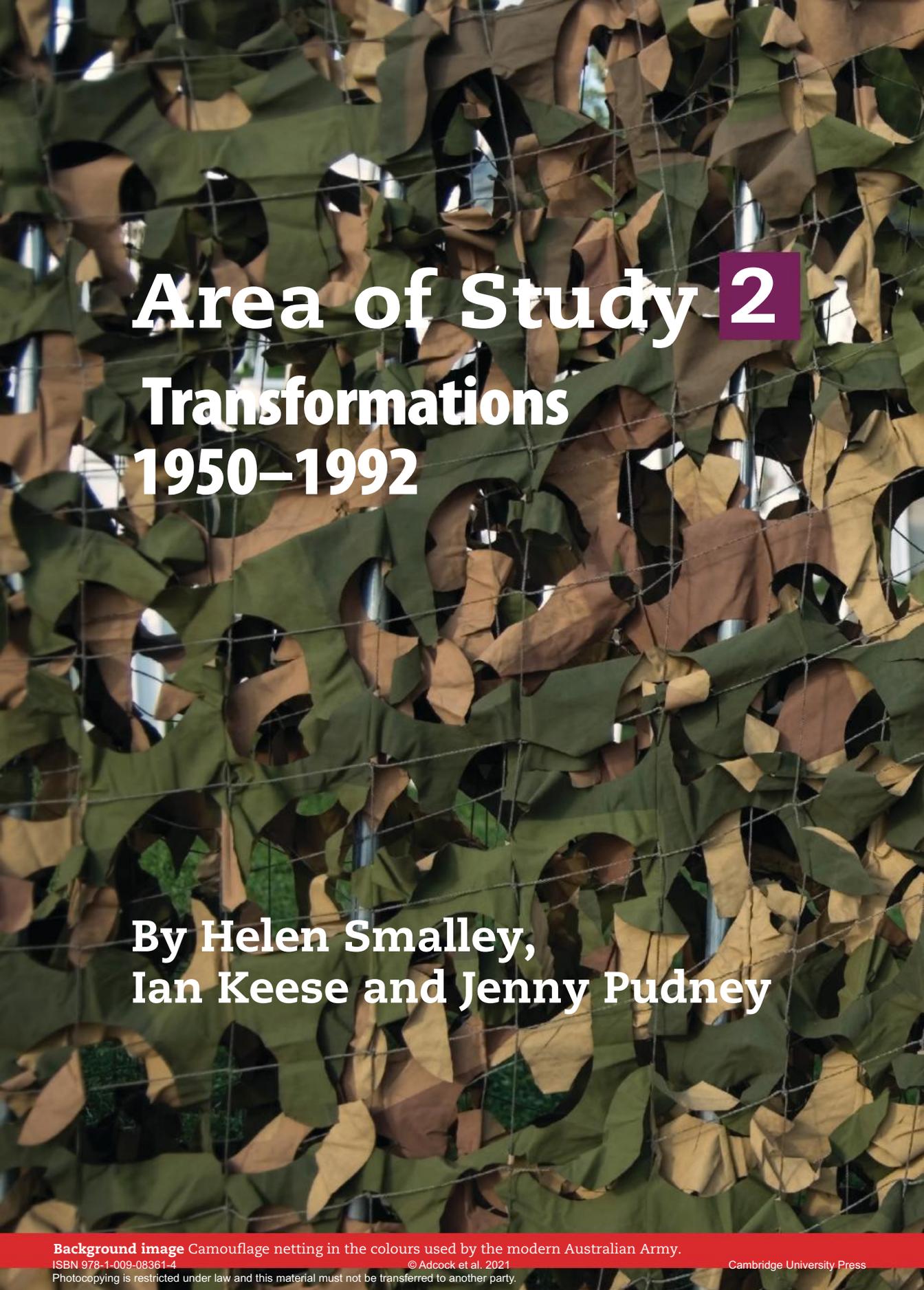
- There is no doubt that, in the short-term, World War II brought enormous opportunities to women in Australia. In total, 250 000 women took on paid jobs in industry and other civilian employments.
- Early in the war (1939–41), people still expected women to play traditional domestic roles.
- The crisis of the war (1942–43) forced governments and individuals to accept the necessity of mobilising female labour.
- For many women, this was their first experience of earning an independent income, although it was about half the rate paid to men.
- For many women, this was their first experience of proving their competency in heavy jobs usually done by men, and of holding positions of responsibility.
- Another 66 000 women entered the auxiliary services of the Army, Navy and Air Force, and had the experience of wearing a uniform and of holding rank.
- For women and men alike, the war was a moment of discovery, that women were physically and intellectually able to do jobs normally done by men.
- Female participation in the workforce was resisted by some, notably the trade union movement, which wanted to protect men's access to employment.
- Female participation in the workforce was also limited by class and wealth. Middle-class women with some wealth were better able to do volunteer work; working-class women, with few savings, could only take up paid jobs.
- When peace came and the men returned, most of these women lost their jobs. They were asked instead to move back into 'women's jobs' at lower pay or, better still, to marry and raise a family in the suburbs. Many were happy to oblige, although others regretted the loss of opportunity. Life slowly returned to 'normal'. But not quite. Wartime had proved women's capabilities in many areas and by the late 1950s demands for a more equal workforce were growing.
- In the longer term, many women did not retain their jobs after 1945, and went back to domestic life and duties. Nonetheless, they had had an important, liberating experience, and this would feed into feminist campaigns for women's participation during the post-war era.

## 5.2 End-of-chapter activities

### Consolidating your understanding

#### Essay writing

1. What were the continuities and changes in Australian society between 1909 and 1950?
2. To what extent may the two world wars be described as having transformed Australian society?



# Area of Study **2**

## Transformations 1950–1992

By Helen Smalley,  
Ian Keese and Jenny Pudney

## Introduction

A soldier setting sail on a troop ship in 1940, with the aim of supporting Britain in its second conflict against Germany, could not have imagined how different military involvement would be in the 1990s. On your journey through this course, you will be exploring some of the significant changes that have taken place in this period and what have been their causes and their consequences. This will assist you in a far better understanding of the world into which you are entering.

The first turning point in this transformation was a result of the military expansion of Japan in the early 1940s through Southeast Asia. The Japanese military machine was so strong it forced the retreat of the British, French and Dutch colonial powers in the region. For Australia, there was the real threat of invasion. Japanese forces were advancing in New Guinea, bombing Darwin and other northern Australian cities and towns, and launching torpedoes from mini-submarines in Sydney Harbour. Defending Australia itself became the first priority, rather than helping in wars on the other side of the world.

Where was a country with a relatively small population to get military assistance against such a powerful enemy? This is where our second turning point came. Fortunately for us, the United States had been drawn into the war when Japan bombed their naval base in Hawaii, and we decided to tie up our fate with theirs. Today, eighty years later, our Defence policies are still influenced by this alliance with the United States. In the period covered here you will explore what the benefits and the disadvantages this involvement has had, and what the continuities are today.

The Korean and Vietnamese conflicts are all examples of another thing you will explore which would have surprised our imaginary soldier of the 1940s – our much closer relationship with our Asian neighbours. Following World War II, the European powers tried to regain control of their colonies, but Malaysians, Indonesians and Vietnamese peoples (among others) were determined to gain their independence. Unfortunately, in the case of Korea and Vietnam, this became tied up with a wider conflict between the United States and its allies, and the Soviet Union. This conflict is known as the Cold War. However, in Malaysia and Indonesia in particular, the ways in which our military forces carried out their activities helped us establish a good reputation in the area.

Finally, our imaginary soldier probably would never have imagined a female jet pilot or Commanding Officer, an openly gay soldier, or being under the command of an Indigenous Lance Corporal. It was during this period that many decades of discrimination began to be wiped away. In some ways, these changes happened more quickly in the Australian Defence Forces than in civilian life.

We know you will enjoy your journey through a world that is both different from that of our imaginary soldier, but also quite different to the world that you are entering.

# Timeline

World events	Date	Australian events
<b>1945</b>		
<b>February:</b> Yalta Conference held		Prime Minister John Curtin dies, replaced by Ben Chifley
<b>May:</b> Germany surrenders		Australian forces join US-led military occupation of Japan
<b>August:</b> Atomic bomb dropped on Hiroshima		Foreign Minister H.V. Evatt plays important role in the United Nations, so too does Australian feminist delegate Jessie Street in the UN Declaration of Human Rights and the establishment of the Commission on the Status of Women
<b>September:</b> Japan surrenders		
<b>October:</b> United Nations formed		
<b>1946</b>		
<b>March:</b> Churchill's Iron Curtain speech		
<b>November:</b> French bomb Haiphong, start of Indochina War		
<b>1947</b>		
		Refugees from Soviet-occupied countries begin arriving
<b>1948</b>		
		World War II's Women's Auxiliary Services disbanded
<b>June:</b> Malayan Emergency begins		
<b>1949</b>		
<b>October:</b> Communist victory in China		<b>November:</b> Liberal–Country Party Government under Robert Menzies elected
<b>1950</b>		
<b>February:</b> Alliance between Communist China and Soviet Union formed		During the Korean War (1950–53), Australia was part of a US-led UN force made up of 23 countries defending South Korea against the communist-backed North
<b>June:</b> Outbreak of war in Korea		Women's Royal Australian Air Force (WRAAF) formed
<b>1950–60:</b> Malayan Emergency,		Women's Royal Australian Naval Service (WRANS) formed
		Australia part of the British-led Commonwealth force countering communist insurgency

World events	Date	Australian events
	<b>1951</b>	<p><b>April:</b> Liberal–Country coalition government re-elected</p> <p><b>September:</b> Australia signs ANZUS Treaty</p> <p><b>September:</b> Referendum on banning the Communism Party fails Women’s Royal Australian Army Corps (WRAAC) formed</p>
	<b>1952</b>	<p>First nuclear tests in Australia</p>
<b>July:</b> Armistice signed in Korean War	<b>1953</b>	
	<b>1954</b>	<b>April:</b> Petrov Affair
	<b>1962</b>	30 Australian military advisers are sent to Vietnam to train the South Vietnamese Army
By end of 1963, the United States has 15 000 advisers in South Vietnam and has donated US\$500 000 000 to South Vietnam	<b>1963</b>	
	<b>1964</b>	<p><b>8 June:</b> Australia increases its military advisers to Vietnam to 83 with expanded roles</p> <p><b>10 November:</b> Prime Minister Menzies announces the reintroduction of the National Service Scheme through the National Service Act</p> <p><b>18 December:</b> Australia sends additional 200 advisers to Vietnam and offers to send ground troops</p>
	<b>1965</b>	<p>National Service Act amended to provide that conscripts could be obliged to serve overseas</p> <p><b>30 June:</b> First National Service intake starts training</p> <p><b>8 March:</b> the United States sends its first combat troops to Vietnam (3500 Marines)</p>

World events	Date	Australian events
		<p><b>29 April:</b> Prime Minister Menzies announces the First Battalion (800 infantry troops) will be sent to Vietnam</p> <p><b>8 June:</b> Bulk of First Battalion arrives in Vietnam</p> <p><b>17 August:</b> Australian Government announces increase in Australian forces</p> <p><b>1965:</b> Formation of the Save Our Sons (SOS) movement</p>
	1966	<p><b>6 March:</b> Prime Minister Holt announces that National Servicemen would be sent to Vietnam to fight in units of the Australian Regular Army</p> <p><b>May:</b> First National Servicemen are sent to Vietnam as part of 1st Australian Task Force</p> <p><b>24 May:</b> Private Errol Noak becomes the first National Serviceman to be killed in Vietnam</p> <p><b>6 March:</b> Prime Minister Holt announces an increase to 4350-man task force, including National Servicemen</p>
<b>26 May:</b> New Zealand commits a battalion to Vietnam	1967	<p><b>October:</b> US President Lyndon Johnson visits Australia</p> <p>First Australian woman deployed overseas to Singapore in the 121 Signals Squadron</p> <p><b>18 October:</b> Prime Minister Holt announces an increase of 1700 to Australia's commitment</p>
	1968	<p><b>12 February:</b> Prime Minister Gorton indicates that Australia will not increase its commitment to Vietnam</p>
US President Richard Nixon announces the 'Vietnamisation' of the war and begins to bring troops home	1969	
	1970	<p><b>April:</b> Prime Minister Gorton announces the beginning of troop withdrawal from Vietnam</p>

World events	Date	Australian events
		<b>1970/71:</b> Moratorium marches against the war in Vietnam
	<b>1971</b>	<b>18 August:</b> Prime Minister McMahon announces that the bulk of Australian forces are to be withdrawn, leaving only a modified advisory team Period of National Service reduced to 18 months
	<b>1972</b>	<b>5 December:</b> The newly elected Whitlam Labor Government ends conscription. Draft resisters are released from prison and pending prosecutions are dropped. <b>8 December:</b> Australia's military commitment in Vietnam ends
UN Year of Women	<b>1975</b>	Racial Discrimination Act makes it unlawful to act in any way that involves a distinction, exclusion, restriction or preference based on race, colour, descent or national or ethnic origin, including employment and service in the Australian Defence Force (ADF) Military chiefs establish committee to explore opportunities for increased female participation
	<b>1977</b>	WRAAF absorbed into mainstream RAAF
	<b>1978</b>	Federal Government approves the full integration of women into the other services
	<b>1981</b>	North West Force (Norforce) Indigenous Regional Force Surveillance units formed
	<b>1982</b>	Pilbara Regiment Indigenous Regional Force Surveillance units formed

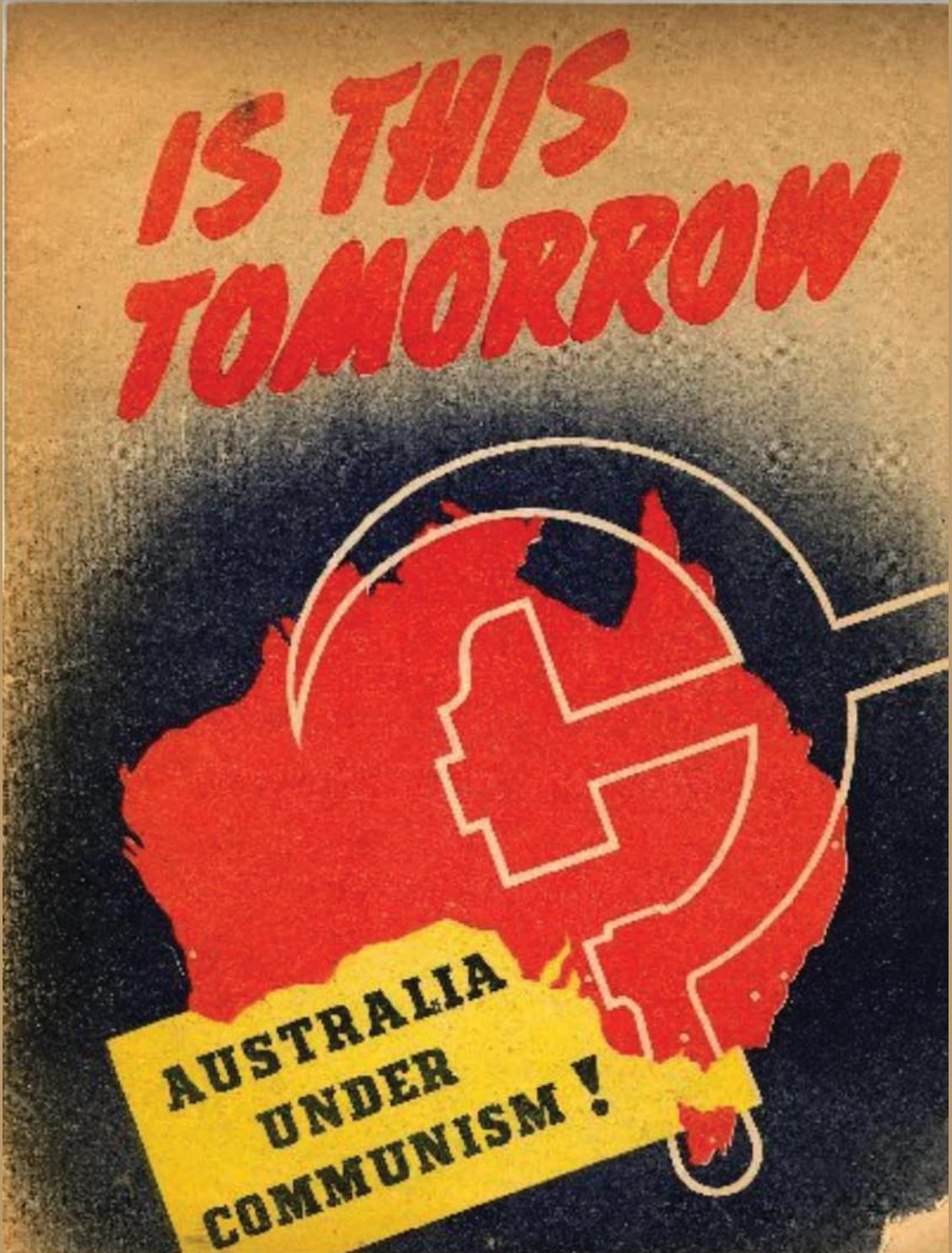
World events	Date	Australian events
	1983	Australia ratifies <i>Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women</i> (CEDAW) but supports exclusion of women from combat Women now allowed to serve on naval ships
	1984	Final disbandment of WRAAC Sex Discrimination Act grants an exemption to the ADF in respect of women in combat
	1985	Final disbandment of WRANS Far North Queensland Regiment formed
	1986	ADF Academy opens and gives women identical degree training alongside male colleagues
	1987	First two female RAAF pilots enlisted (Robyn Williams and Deborah Hicks)
	1992	Prime Minister Paul Keating announces women can serve in all Army, Navy and Air Force units except in direct combat units Prime Minister Paul Keating's Redfern Speech Removal from the Defence Act of the last piece discriminatory policy that had exempted only Indigenous men from compulsory National Service in the event of war Recognition of a group of Indigenous ex-servicemen who had been members of the Northern Territory Special Reconnaissance Unit that patrolled Australia's northern coastline during World War II The end of the ban on LGBTQIA+ people in the ADF

*Notable Australian Prime Ministers and Opposition Leaders referenced in this area of study*

Period	Prime Minister	Period	Opposition Leader
1949–66	Robert Menzies (Liberal) 	1949–51	Ben Chifley (ALP) 
1951–60			Herbert Evatt (ALP) 
1966–67	Harold Holt (Liberal) 	1967–72	Arthur Calwell (ALP) 
1968–71	John Gorton (Liberal) 	1960–67	Gough Whitlam (ALP) 
1972–75	Gough Whitlam (ALP)		
1991–96	Paul Keating (ALP) 		

# CHAPTER 6

## Australia and the Cold War



**Source 6.0** *Is this tomorrow? Australia Under Communism.* From a comic published in 1947.

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Cambridge University Press

## Chapter timeline

World events	Date	Australian events
<b>1945</b>		
<p><b>February:</b> Yalta Conference held</p> <p><b>May:</b> Germany surrenders</p> <p><b>August:</b> Atomic bomb dropped on Hiroshima</p> <p><b>September:</b> Japan surrenders</p> <p><b>October:</b> United Nations formed</p>		<p>Prime Minister John Curtin dies, replaced by Ben Chifley</p> <p>Australian forces join US-led military occupation of Japan</p> <p>Foreign Minister H.V. Evatt plays important role in the United Nations, so too does Australian feminist delegate Jessie Street in the UN Declaration of Human Rights and the establishment of the Commission on the Status of Women</p>
<b>1946</b>		
<p><b>March:</b> Churchill's Iron Curtain speech</p> <p><b>November:</b> French bomb Haiphong, start of Indochina War</p>		
<b>1947</b>		
		Refugees from Soviet-occupied countries begin arriving
<b>1948</b>		
		World War II's Women's Auxiliary Services disbanded
<p><b>June:</b> Malayan Emergency begins</p>		
<b>1949</b>		
<p><b>October:</b> Communist victory in China</p>		<p><b>November:</b> Liberal–Country Party Government under Robert Menzies elected</p>
<b>1950</b>		
<p><b>February:</b> Alliance between Communist China and Soviet Union formed</p> <p><b>June:</b> Outbreak of war in Korea</p> <p><b>1950–60:</b> Malayan Emergency,</p>		<p>During the Korean War (1950–53), Australia was part of a UN force made up of 23 countries defending South Korea against the communist-backed North</p> <p>Women's Royal Australian Air Force (WRAAF) formed</p> <p>Women's Royal Australian Naval Service (WRANS) formed</p> <p>Australia part of the British-led Commonwealth force countering communist insurgency</p>

World events	Date	Australian events
	<b>1951</b>	
		<b>April:</b> Liberal–Country Party Government re-elected <b>September:</b> Australia signs ANZUS Treaty <b>September:</b> Referendum on banning the Communism Party fails Women’s Royal Australian Army Corps (WRAAC) formed
	<b>1952</b>	
		First nuclear tests in Australia
	<b>1953</b>	
<b>July:</b> Armistice signed in Korean War	▼	
	<b>1954</b>	<b>April:</b> Petrov Affair

## 6.1 Introduction: The post-World War II world

### INQUIRY QUESTION

How did the tensions and conflicts of the Cold War impact Australia?

In the first half of the twentieth century, Australia was involved in two wars in Europe, but during our period of study – the 50 years following World War II – the main areas of Australia’s military involvement have been in the Southeast and East Asian region: Korea, Malaysia, Indonesia and Vietnam.

In each of the conflicts, three factors that arose following World War II have, to different extents, played a part. Four years of invasion, conquest and bombing had seriously weakened the European powers in material and economic terms. On the other hand, the United States had not had to fight a war on its own soil. War stimulated its industrial development and European countries were deeply in debt to the United States. The United States had also been the first to develop what seemed to be the ultimate military weapons, the atomic and then the hydrogen bombs.

The conflicts have all arisen out of former colonies of European countries, or of Japan in the case of Korea, seeking their independence as self-governing states.

The politics of the Cold War have been involved, to a large extent in the Korean and Vietnamese conflicts, and to a smaller extent in the Malaysian conflict.

## 6.2 Origins of the Cold War: From allies to enemies

### INQUIRY QUESTION

How did ideological differences lead to the Cold War?

In February 1945, with the defeat of the Nazis within sight, the leaders of the soon-to-be victorious allies – Franklin D. Roosevelt (United States), Winston Churchill (Great Britain) and Joseph Stalin (Soviet Union) – met at the Yalta Conference, on the Crimean Peninsula, to determine Europe's post-war geographical, political and economic structure. The result was that the nations of eastern Europe and the eastern part of Germany were to fall under the Soviet sphere of influence, while the rest of Europe, including West Germany would continue as part of the democratic world, with leadership assumed by the United States, through the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO). The ideological struggle that ensued between these competing worldviews came to be known as the Cold War.



↑ **Source 6.1** Roosevelt, Churchill and Stalin at the Livadia Palace during the Yalta Conference, 9 February 1945.

Source 6.2 is an extract from Winston Churchill's 'Iron Curtain' speech, given in Fulton, Missouri on 5 March 1946.

**Source 6.2**

A shadow has fallen upon the scenes so lately lighted by the Allied victory ... There is deep sympathy and goodwill in Britain and I doubt not here also – towards the peoples of all the Russias and a resolve to persevere through many differences and rebuffs in establishing lasting friendships. We understand the Russian need to be secure on her western frontiers by the removal of all possibility of German aggression. We welcome Russia to her rightful place among the leading nations of the world ... It is my duty however, for I am sure you would wish me to state the facts as I see them to you, to place before you certain facts about the present position in Europe.

From Stettin in the Baltic to Trieste in the Adriatic, an iron curtain has descended across the Continent. Behind that line lie all the capitals of the ancient states of Central and Eastern Europe. Warsaw, Berlin, Prague, Vienna, Budapest, Belgrade, Bucharest and Sofia, all these famous cities and the populations around them lie in what I must call the Soviet sphere, and all are subject in one form or another, not only to Soviet influence but to a very high and, in many cases, increasing measure of control from Moscow.

Winston Churchill, 'The Sinews of Peace (Iron Curtain speech)', March 5 1946, International Churchill Society website.<sup>1</sup>



↑ **Source 6.3** Post-war division of Europe by the 'Iron Curtain'.

## FOCUS QUESTIONS 6.1

1. Using an atlas, locate the following places mentioned in Sources 6.1 and 6.2:
  - Yalta
  - Stettin
  - Trieste.
2. For which of the three leaders depicted in Source 6.1 would Yalta have been chosen as a place for a conference?
3. Name the six European countries that were not socialist (communist), but were also not aligned to NATO.

## 6.3 The United Nations

### INQUIRY QUESTION

What were the goals behind the creation of the United Nations?

Plans to form a new world organisation began quite early in World War II. Australia, as a member of the Allied forces, was involved from the start. In August 1941, the British Prime Minister Winston Churchill and the American President Franklin D. Roosevelt met on a ship in the Atlantic and signed what became known as the Atlantic Charter. (The United States at this stage was not at war – this did not happen until after the bombing of the American Pacific base of Pearl Harbor on 7 December 1941.)

The Atlantic Charter was not a treaty or agreement, but rather a statement on what such an agreement might achieve. It was seen as an affirmation ‘of certain common principles in the national policies of their respective countries on which they based their hopes for a better future for the world’. The sixth clause of the Atlantic Charter declared that ‘after the final destruction of Nazi tyranny they hope to see established a peace which will afford to all nations the means of dwelling in safety within their own boundaries, and which will afford assurance that all the men in all the lands may live out their lives in freedom from fear and want’.

The United Nations was formed in October 1945 at a two-month conference held in San Francisco between 25 April and 26 June. There were 50 participants. Each country was represented in the General Assembly, where each state had one vote irrespective of its population. Australia was included in the first 50 members of the General Assembly.

Above the General Assembly is the Security Council. Any decisions of the General Assembly involving military action can only be carried out if voted on by the Security Council. This has 10 members. There are five permanent members: China, the Soviet Union, the United States, United Kingdom and France, and five additional members who are elected for a two-year term. Australia has been on the Security Council five times: 1946–47; 1956–57; 1973–74; 1985–86 and 2013–14. Each of the five permanent members of the Security Council have the power to **veto** any decision to take action, which came to be an important factor in the Korean War (see page 192).

**veto** the power for any one of the five permanent members to stop a majority decision



↑ **Source 6.4** A vote being taken at the United Nations

### USING HISTORICAL SOURCES AS EVIDENCE 6.1

1. Which countries held permanent seats on the Security Council? How many times has Australia been a member so far?
2. Outline the role of the Security Council in the United Nations.
3. Source 6.4 depicts a vote being taken at the United Nations. Name at least four countries that are voting 'Yes'.

## 6.4 Decolonisation and the threat of communism

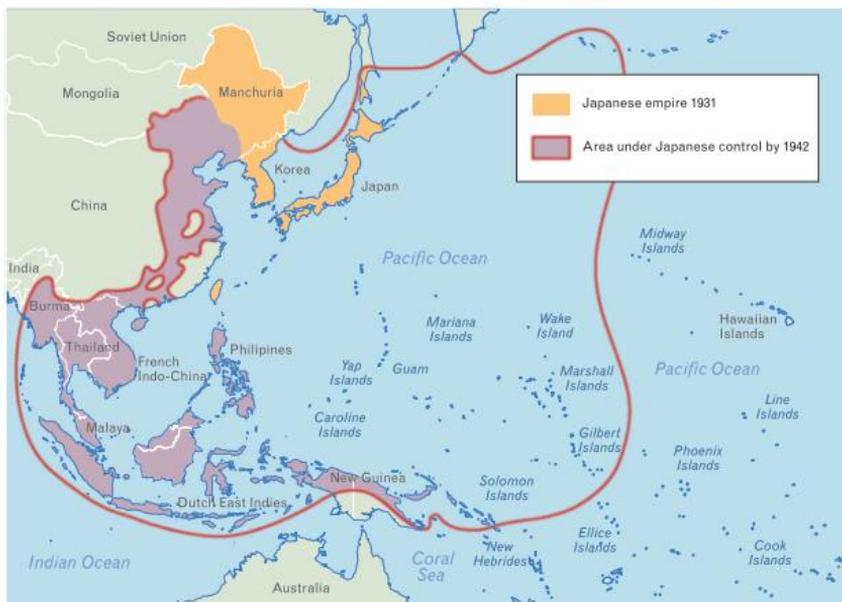
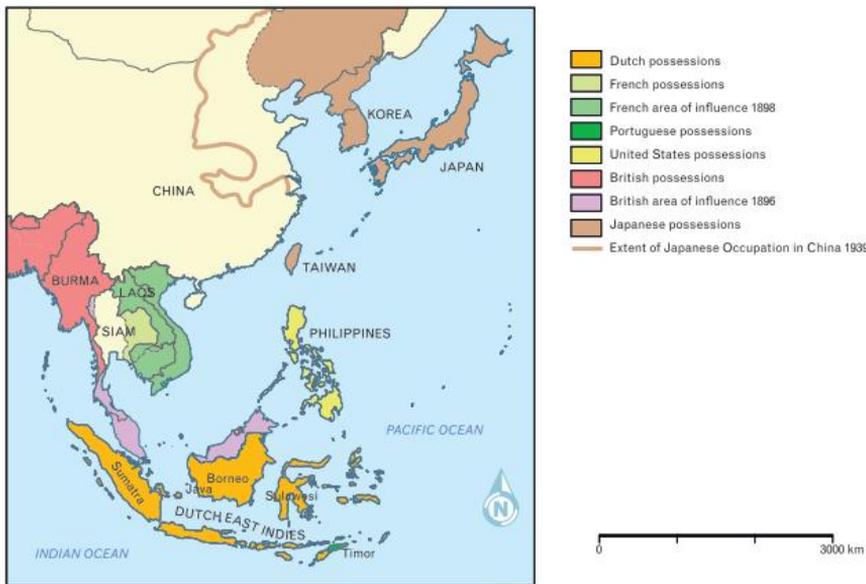
### INQUIRY QUESTION

How did decolonisation of Asian countries lead to conflicts in the region?

### USING HISTORICAL SOURCES AS EVIDENCE 6.2

After referring to Source 6.5, complete the following table by matching today's nations with their former colonial powers. You might need a contemporary map to identify some countries.

Current name	Former name (if different)	Colonial power
Malaysia	Malaya, Sarawak and North Borneo	
Philippines		
North Korea	Korea	
South Korea	Korea	
Vietnam		
Laos	French Indochina	
Cambodia		



### USING HISTORICAL SOURCES AS EVIDENCE 6.3

Looking at Source 6.6, why would Australians have been fearful in 1942?

When the Japanese surrendered in August 1945 after the bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, all their forces in Southeast Asia were withdrawn. However, three years of Japanese rule had two important effects on the people in these colonial countries. First, it showed the weakness of the European powers. Second, it encouraged people to think of 'Asia for Asians'. Groups that had fought against the Japanese now considered fighting against their European rulers. Both factors strengthened the movements for independence that had already begun before the war. Australian troops became involved in Korea, Vietnam and Malaysia and, to a limited extent, Indonesia.

The instability of the post-war period in Asia became a reflection of the broader Cold War struggle. According to historian Michael Meyer, the Cold War as a whole was the most transformative event of the twentieth century.

#### Source 6.7

It is almost impossible to comprehend the full dimension and consequence of the Cold War. For future generations it will define the twentieth century ... It dwarfs any other event ... it pitted two utterly alien political and economic systems, do or die, one against the other. There were few genuinely neutral parties save for Swiss bankers and some Neolithic tribes in the Amazon rainforest.

Michael Meyer, *The Year That Changed the World*, Simon & Schuster, London, 2009, p. 20.

### USING HISTORICAL SOURCES AS EVIDENCE 6.4

Examine Source 6.7. Why does Michael Meyer claim that the Cold War defines the twentieth century?

## 6.5 Debating the issue: Australian politics and the Cold War

### INQUIRY QUESTION

How did the Government and the Opposition respond to the upheaval of the Cold War?

To better understand the divisions between Australia's major political parties, it is important to understand their historically different ideologies.

In the 1950s the Liberal–Country coalition government and the Australian Labor Party opposition differed fundamentally on the extent to which the government should be involved in the social and economic life of the nation. While both sought the betterment of society, they

approached it in different ways: the Coalition was against excessive government intervention in the economy and society, whereas the Australian Labor Party believed that the government should intervene in many areas of national life such as health, banking and business. The Labor Party's roots in the union movement placed it firmly on the side of the worker, while the Liberal–Country Party saw unionism as a threat to free enterprise. Additionally, in an era when most Australians had a religious affiliation, the parties differed along sectarian lines with Protestants generally supporting the Liberal and Country parties while many Catholic workers supported the Labor Party.

Historian John Murphy describes the parties' different approaches to foreign policy in the postwar years. On the one hand, the Labor Party was 'vaguely' opposed to colonialism, sympathetic to emergent nationalism and had 'a suspicion that poverty lay at the heart of postcolonial ferment' [agitation]. For Labor, the United Nations was to be the 'means of resolving conflicts'. The Coalition, on the other hand, 'brought a more oppositional vision to international affairs, as a Cold War struggle with an aggressive communist imperialism'. They saw the United Nations as 'relatively powerless and emphasized the need to cultivate regional security alliances'.<sup>2</sup>

During World War II and the post-war period, the Federal Labor Government, still with the memory of the economic and social hardships of the Great Depression fresh in its members' minds, set about a series of wide-ranging social reforms with the goal of 'improving the standard of living for the mass of the people'. These reforms included expansion of welfare services, education and housing. The most controversial reform was the proposed nationalisation of the banking system. Prime Minister Chifley argued that the control of money and credit was too important to be left to the private banks.<sup>3</sup>

The Great Depression 'had left a legacy of deep distrust of banks because of the banks' perceived inability or unwillingness to safeguard the interests of ordinary Australians'.<sup>4</sup>

During the 1949 election campaign, *The Argus* newspaper reported on then Liberal–Country Party Opposition Leader Robert Menzies' attack on communism and the Labor Government.

#### **'WE WILL THRASH REDS', SAYS MENZIES**

Nearly 4000 people cheered wildly at Hurstville tonight when Mr. R. G Menzies, Opposition Leader, said, 'we are going to declare war on the Communists, we are going to give them a thrashing.'

Another burst of applause greeted Mr. Menzies' announcement that the first bill a LCP Government would introduce would wipe out the Bank Nationalization Act.

'I think that we can claim to have shown in this campaign that the Chifley Government [ALP] is not only pledged to the socialization of industry, but actively engaged, as the last three years have proved, in honouring that pledge ...'

In banking, in shipping, in medicine, in insurance, in air services, in broadcasting, the Chifley Government already has a formidable achievement. Under its direction, we have moved rapidly along the road to the Socialist Master State.

*The Argus*, 'We Will Thrash Reds', says Menzies, December 8 1949, National Library of Australia, Trove website.<sup>5</sup>

Source 6.8

## USING HISTORICAL SOURCES AS EVIDENCE 6.5

1. Outline the key features of communism.
2. Based on your understanding of communism and your analysis of Source 6.8, to what extent was then Opposition Leader Robert Menzies correct to link some of the ALP policies as socialism and communism?

## 6.6 Communism: An election, a dissolution Act and a referendum

### INQUIRY QUESTION

How did the Federal Government respond to the threat of communism in Australia?

Politically, the Cold War exacerbated this ideological divide between the conservative Liberal–Country Party (LCP) Government and the more progressive Australian Labor Party (ALP).

The fear of communism became a political weapon used by the LCP against the Opposition, contributing to Robert Menzies becoming the longest-serving Prime Minister in Australian history. Against the backdrop of the Korean War, the LCP made the threat of communism its main issue during the 1951 election campaign. Menzies accused the ALP opposition of being soft on communism and ALP members of cooperating with communists in the trade unions.<sup>6</sup>

The ALP itself was divided between those who supported the rights of communists (the Australian Communist Party [ACP] was still a legal entity) and those who totally opposed communism and were more in line with the government on this issue. By 1955, this division had led to a split in the ALP, with the latter group forming the Democratic Labor Party (DLP). This move also contributed to the ALP's lack of electoral success throughout the 1950s and 60s as the DLP allocated their preferences to the Liberal–Country coalition.

The election propaganda of the Liberal Party in the 1951 federal election reflected the Liberals' attempts to conflate the ALP opposition with communism. In Tasmania, the Party's campaign slogan was 'Menzies or Moscow'. In Dr. H.V. Evatt's Labor-held seat, the Liberal candidate, war heroine Nancy Wake campaigned on the slogan 'I am the defender of freedom; Dr Evatt is the defender of communism'.<sup>7</sup>

## USING HISTORICAL SOURCES AS EVIDENCE 6.6

1. Identify the different sides in the 1951 federal election.
2. Outline how they were represented by their opponents.
3. Describe how they used electioneering slogans to attract voters.

A correspondent to the *Launceston Examiner*, A.C. Atkin, took issue with the 'Menzies or Moscow' slogan.

It does not appear to me to be a case of the Liberal Party fighting fearlessly and honestly for what it believes to be right, but rather a despicable and ruthless determination to destroy a movement out to bring economic security to all people. I would like to know how Mr. Kekwick [Liberal candidate] reconciles this ‘Menzies or Moscow’ propaganda with the truth.

Source 6.9

A.C. Atkin, ‘Party Propaganda’, May 11 1951,  
National Library of Australia, Trove website.<sup>8</sup>

## USING HISTORICAL SOURCES AS EVIDENCE 6.7

1. Examine Source 6.9. What is Atkin’s issue with the Liberal Party?
2. What is Atkin’s view on communism?

After being banned at the outset of World War II, the Communist Party of Australia was reinstated when Russia became an ally during that war. In 1951, the Menzies Government (fresh from their election victory) again tried to ban the now-named Australian Communist Party. The first attempt was by legislation but the High Court ruled that the *Communist Party Dissolution Act, 1950* (Cth) was invalid. The Menzies Government then attempted to ban the Communist Party via a referendum to change the provisions of the Constitution.

Source 6.10 shows the competing campaign posters for the referendum held on 22 September 1951.



↑ Source 6.10 (Left) Australian Communist Party poster (the figure is Menzies). (Right) Liberal Party poster.

## USING HISTORICAL SOURCES AS EVIDENCE 6.8

Examine Source 6.10 and identify the claims in each poster.

The Australian people were asked the following question on the 22nd September 1951.

### Question

Do you approve of the proposed law for the alteration of the Constitution entitled 'Constitution Alteration (Powers to deal with Communists and Communism) 1951'?

The Constitution Alteration (Powers to deal with Communists and Communism) 1951 sought to give the Commonwealth Parliament power to make laws with respect to communists and communism where this was necessary for the security of the Commonwealth.

For a referendum to be carried, there must be a majority of 'yes' votes, and in a majority of states. In this case there was a majority of 'yes' votes in only three states, and the overall vote was in the minority by 52 082 votes, therefore the referendum was not carried.

### ↓ Source 6.11

Results of referendum on 22 September 1951

State	Enrolled	Votes	For	%	Against	%	Informal
New South Wales	1 944 219	1 861 147	865 838	47.17	969 868	52.83	25 441
Victoria	1 393 556	1 326 024	636 819	48.71	670 513	51.29	18 692
Queensland	709 328	675 916	373 156	55.76	296 019	44.24	6 741
South Australia	442 983	427 253	198 971	47.29	221 763	52.71	6 519
Western Australia	319 383	305 653	1,64 989	55.09	134 497	44.91	6 167
Tasmania	164 868	158 596	78 154	50.26	77 349	49.74	3 093
Total for Commonwealth	4 974 337	4 754 589*	2 317 927	49.44	2 370 009	50.56	66 653

\*Including 9477 votes by members of the Forces, of which 6478 were for, 2912 against and 82 informal.

Source: Referendum Results, 22 September 1951, (24) Communists and Communism, Parliament of Australia website, accessed September 2021<sup>9</sup>

## USING HISTORICAL SOURCES AS EVIDENCE 6.9

1. Examine Source 6.11. Which states were more anti-communist?
2. What do the votes of the armed forces members indicate about their views?
3. What evidence is there that the country was almost evenly divided on the issue?

In a 1951 election campaign speech, Prime Minister Menzies detailed the government's position on communism.

The industrial activities of the Communists prove them to be destructive and disloyal, a fifth column for a potential enemy. Why should Communists do these things? The answer is that Communism is a materialistic doctrine, void of spiritual content. It is not only anti-Christian, but is opposed to all those nobler aspirations which spring from the religious faith of decent people. True, Communism itself has been called, by some, a religion. But it is a religion of hatred; it derives from the darkest recesses of the human mind; it has nothing in common with the Christian gospel of love and brotherhood. If it had, it could not preach the class war or use envy and malice as its characteristic weapons. ...

When, therefore, I say to you that the Government is pledged to make war upon Communism I am not talking about an attack upon individuals as such (though we are determined to root out key Communists from key positions), but upon a set of evil ideas which are quite foreign to our civilisation, our traditions, and our faith.

Those who persist, as does the Leader of the Opposition [Dr. Evatt], in regarding Communism as just some variant of democratic political philosophy entirely overlook the fact that Communism is debased, treasonable, utterly undemocratic; in form a subversive conspiracy; in practice opposed to high standards of living and real prosperity; destructive, if it succeeds, of all human freedom.

We are pledged to fight it, and to defeat it.

Robert Menzies, 'Communism' *Australian Federal Election Speeches*, April 28 1951, Museum of Australian Democracy website.<sup>10</sup>

Source 6.12

## RESEARCH TASK 2.1

Research some other political cartoons produced by the Liberal Party at the time. For example, Norman Lindsay's, 'Nearer, Clearer, Deadlier' (1950) or 'The Red River' from *The Bulletin*, 16 June 1954. What do these images have in common?

### USING HISTORICAL SOURCES AS EVIDENCE 6.10

1. Define the term 'fifth column'.
2. Examine Source 6.12. Summarise Prime Minister Menzies' main concerns about communism.

Later in the year, the leader of the ALP, Dr Bert Evatt, toured the country speaking to the 'No' vote in the upcoming September referendum. His speech at the South Melbourne Town Hall was reported in *The Age* newspaper. In Source 6.13, he also references the government's first attempt at banning the ACP, the Communist Party Dissolution Act.

Source 6.13

**DR. EVATT CHEERED AT ‘NO’ MEETING**

Dr Evatt speaking with rare vigour described the communist dissolution act which the High Court declared invalid as ‘an unjust and iniquitous proposal’. The question he said ‘is not whether the people approve of communist practices, but solely whether they approve of the government’s proposed method of administering by the revolutionary procedures of totalitarianism and fascism ... no one with a sense of justice can support such tyrannical and arbitrary measures’.

‘Dr. Evatt cheered at ‘no’ meeting’, *The Age*, Aug 22 1951, National Library of Australia, Trove website.<sup>11</sup>

Leading up to the referendum, opinion polling suggested that voters would overwhelmingly approve the ban of the Communist Party. Historian Frank Bongiorno states:

Source 6.14

Evatt’s triumph was to turn the rhetoric of Cold War back on his opponents [the Menzies Government]. His technique was to associate the government’s proposed methods with ‘the revolutionary procedures of totalitarianism and Facism’ and argue against attacking ‘Communism by the methods of the jackboot, the spy system and the concentration camp.’

Frank Bongiorno, ‘Amid panic, a sense of purpose’, September 20 2011, Inside Story website.<sup>12</sup>

**USING HISTORICAL SOURCES AS EVIDENCE 6.11**

1. Identify the descriptive language used in Source 6.13 by Dr Evatt and how he tries to sway voters.
2. According to Frank Bongiorno in Source 6.14, why was the referendum defeated?

**6.7 The National Service Act, 1951 (Cth)**

**INQUIRY QUESTIONS**

Why did the Australian Government introduce a National Service Scheme in 1951?  
How was the introduction of this scheme received by the Australian public?



↑ **Source 6.15** National Service recruits, 1950s

Against the backdrop of escalating regional tensions in Southeast Asia, and China having become a communist state only two years earlier, the LCP Government introduced a National Service Scheme in 1951. The aims of the scheme were twofold:

- to have any shortfall in volunteer recruitment met by National Servicemen
- to bolster the Army Reserve as a strategic contingency measure within Australia, not to reinforce the full-time Army overseas.<sup>13</sup>

The introduction of National Service 'had not been a divisive political issue in the 1950s'.<sup>14</sup>

In 1951, Federal Attorney-General Senator Spicer reported on the Scheme to Parliament.

From its inception the scheme has been a great success. It reflects credit on all responsible. The public reaction to, and support of the scheme have been very encouraging, and show clearly that the people appreciate the need for a scheme of national service training for the future defence of this country. The people of this country recognize the benefits that a well planned and capably administered system of training can bestow on the young men called up for service.

**Source 6.16**

Senator Spicer, 'National Service Bill (No.2)', 1951, Historic Hansard website.<sup>15</sup>

**Source 6.17**

Under the scheme, all 18-year-old males were compulsorily required to undertake 176 days of military training, and thereafter become members of the Citizens Military Force. They could nominate the service in which they wanted to be trained, however, to be considered for the Navy or Air Force, they had to volunteer for service overseas. Men who opted for the Army were not required to serve overseas unless they enlisted. [Most served with the Army which was seen as the chief strategic need of the time.] The scheme was criticized as being irrelevant to modern defence needs with skill becoming more important than numbers.<sup>16</sup>

The National Service Scheme, 1951–1972', Australian War Memorial website.<sup>17</sup>

A later assessment of the Act stated:

**Source 6.18**

The scheme proved to be costly, utilizing Regular Army personnel and resources that could be engaged more productively elsewhere. In 1957 National Service was discontinued in the Navy and the Air Force, while the Army intake was reduced to a third (12,000). All 18-year-olds would still have to register but selection would now be by ballot. During the life of the scheme over 500,000 men registered, 52 intakes were organised and some 227,000 men were trained. The Scheme ended in 1959.

'National Service, 1951–1959', 13 Feb 2021, National Archives of Australia website.<sup>18</sup>

## USING HISTORICAL SOURCES AS EVIDENCE 6.12

1. Why did the government introduce the National Service Scheme in 1951?
2. Using Source 6.16, describe how the Scheme was viewed by the people of Australia.
3. Why was the National Service Scheme disbanded in 1959?

## 6.8 The Cold War comes to Australia

### INQUIRY QUESTION

How did the ideological struggles of the Cold War impact Australian society?

Apart from the tensions that were the hallmark of Australia's Cold War politics, the ongoing ideological struggle between the great powers and their allies, played out in both public and private domains as Sources 6.19 to 6.22 reveal.

## The Petrov Affair

The Petrov Affair is an important event in Australian history. It led to a Royal Commission on Espionage – and the events read like a spy thriller. The affair involved the defection of Vladimir Petrov, a Soviet embassy official, who was also a colonel in the Soviet Ministry of State Security (MGB). His move to the ‘other side’ was orchestrated by the newly formed Australian Security and Intelligence Organisation (ASIO), whose goal was to secure useful documents and intelligence on Soviet spying activities in Australia. The Petrov Affair had a dramatic effect on Australian politics. Once again, the Menzies’ Government used the fear of communism in its campaign for the 1954 election, and once again, the ALP and trade union movement were increasingly polarised over the issue of communism.

Sources 6.20 to 6.22 reveal the evolution of Petrov from a dedicated Soviet agent to a defector.



↑ **Source 6.19** Evdokia Petrova at Mascot Airport, Sydney, being escorted across the tarmac to a waiting plane by two armed Soviet diplomatic couriers, 19 April 1954

Petrov frequented the Russian Social Club in Sydney, where he encouraged Russian immigrants to return to Russia to contribute to the Socialist Fatherland. Robert Manne provides a glimpse into the world of espionage through the following ASIO report:

A ‘Q’ source report [written by an agent handler] states that on the 8th September, 1951, Petrov visited the Russian Social Club, and was overheard talking to ‘disgruntled’ New Australians about returning to Russia. Several of the New Australians said they would go to Russia if they could get a visa. A young man ... said that he had applied for a visa, and was waiting for word to go. He said: ‘I can help Russia when I get back. I know the aerodromes in Melbourne and in Tasmania also. When I go back to Russia, I want to join the Red Army and go to Korea and kill Yanks and bloody Australians’. Petrov, who was present, patted him on the back and said: ‘That is good. You are a good Soviet Citizen already’.

Robert Manne, *The Petrov affair: politics and espionage*, Pergamon Press, Sydney, 1987, pp. 10-11.

### Source 6.20

However, by 1954, Petrov was letting ‘forth a torrent on the iniquities of the Soviet system’.

**Source 6.21**

Look at that man! [Malenkov, a Soviet politician]. He and his clique live in luxury, just as the Tsars did, while the masses of Soviet people grovel in poverty! Three million Russians refused to go home after the war. They were better off as prisoners of the Nazis! But if you go to Russia and say these things they’ll cut your head off! ... Why shouldn’t Russians live and let live, open their frontiers, they can’t fool anybody anyway; foreign diplomats can see the whole thing for themselves. I will stay here, I will tell the whole truth, I will write a true story, I will fix those bastards.

Robert Manne, *The Petrov affair: politics and espionage*, Pergamon Press, Sydney, 1987, p. 57.

On 3 April 1954, Petrov formally applied for asylum, saying:

**Source 6.22**

I wish to ask the Australian Government for permission to remain in Australia permanently. I wish to become an Australian citizen as soon as possible. I ask for protection for myself and assistance to establish myself comfortably in this country. I no longer believe in the Communism of the Soviet leadership – I no longer believe in Communism, since I have seen the Australian way of living.

Vladimir Petrov, April 3 1954, Museum of Australian Democracy website.<sup>19</sup>

### USING HISTORICAL SOURCES AS EVIDENCE 6.13

Examine Sources 6.21 and 6.22. What reasons does Petrov give for wanting to become an Australian citizen?

On 13 April 1954, the last sitting day of Parliament before the federal election, the Prime Minister announced that Petrov’s request had been granted.

**Source 6.23**

Some days ago one Vladimir Mikhailovich Petrov, who had been third Secretary to the Soviet embassy in Australia since February 1951, voluntarily left his diplomatic employment and made to the Australian Government through the Australian Security Intelligence organisation a request for political asylum ... The request has been granted.

R. G Menzies, April 13 1954, Museum of Australian Democracy website.<sup>20</sup>

## Perspective

The *Oxford Dictionary of Contemporary World History* points to political opportunism as the root cause of the affair and summarises the outcomes.

On 3 April a Soviet diplomat in Australia, Vladimir Petrov asked for political asylum, subsequently making allegations of widespread Communist activities in official Australian circles. Exploiting it for all it was worth, Menzies hinted at possible involvement by leaders of the Australian Labor Party and hastily set up a Royal commission [into espionage] just before the general election. Accusations against Labor were fuelled by the action of ALP leader Evatt, who served as defence council for some of the accused members of his staff. Ultimately, none of the allegations were substantiated and it was revealed that no information had been passed to the Soviet Union since 1949. The affair facilitated Menzies's win at the 1954 elections, split Labor through the creation of the [anti-communist] Democratic Labor Party and led to the cessation of diplomatic relations with the USSR (1954–1959).

Source 6.24

Christopher Riches and Jan Palmowski, *A dictionary of contemporary world history* [electronic resource], Oxford University Press, 2020.<sup>21</sup>

The *Herald and Weekly Times* published this cartoon in 1954.



↑ Source 6.25 *Herald and Weekly Times*, 1954, in Trengrove A, 1978, *Menzies: a pictorial biography*, Thomas Nelson Australia, Melbourne, p. 47

## USING HISTORICAL SOURCES AS EVIDENCE 6.14

1. Decode the words and symbols in the cartoon in Source 6.25.
2. What is the cartoonist suggesting about Petrov's intentions?

Petrov did not tell his wife that he intended to defect. Mrs Petrov, also a Soviet agent working at the embassy, believed that he had been kidnapped by Australian authorities. In an act of reprisal, the Soviets attempted to take Mrs Petrov back to Moscow. However, on 16 April, the Australian Department of External Affairs sent a note to the Soviet ambassador enclosing a letter to Mrs Petrov from her husband in which he denied he had been forcibly seized and said that he had been treated well. The ambassador compelled Mrs Petrov to write to her husband, refusing to see him. On 19 April, she was driven to the airport in Sydney escorted by two armed Soviet couriers. News of her arrival had leaked and there was a demonstration by a crowd at the airport protesting her treatment. Mrs Petrov decided to stay with her husband in Australia. She managed to alert a stewardess that the Soviet couriers had guns, and 'after a tussle' with Australian agents at a refuelling stop in Darwin, they were arrested. The Petrovs remained in Australia and lived in obscurity for the rest of their lives.<sup>22</sup>

## The Olympic Games in Melbourne, 1956

Melbourne was the unlikely setting for an incident that reflected the deep nationalistic tensions of the Cold War. As teams arrived in Melbourne for the 1956 Olympic Games, a popular uprising emerged half a world away in Hungary. Protests were held against the totalitarian rule of the Soviet-backed government. Russian tanks took control of the Hungarian capital, Budapest, and an estimated 3000 protesters were killed. Four countries decided to boycott the Melbourne Games in protest against the Soviet action. The tensions between the Hungarians and the Russians spilled over into the water polo competition with the infamous 'blood in the water' match.



→ **Source 6.26** An injured Ervin Zador (Hungary) is escorted from the pool, Melbourne Olympic Games, 1956

The crowd of more than 5000 people who crammed the Melbourne natatorium was dominated by Hungarian expatriates, who shouted, ‘Hajra Magyarok!’ (Go Hungarians!), waved flags and shouted epithets [disparaging or abusive words or phrases] as the Soviet players were introduced. ‘We always had an extra incentive when we played the Soviets, but the atmosphere at Melbourne was another dimension,’ Zador said. ‘The game meant so much to us. We had to win the gold medal. We were playing for ourselves, for our families back home, for our country.’

Source 6.27

**FOCUS  
QUESTION 6.2**

Using the Introduction and Source 6.26, explain the underlying causes of the ‘blood in the water’ match.

Miles Corwin, ‘Blood in the Water at the 1956 Olympics’, July 31 2008, Smithsonian Magazine website.<sup>23</sup>

The tensions on display at the Melbourne Olympic Games were a portent of the intense East–West sporting rivalry that was to occur throughout the Cold War. In addition to this incident, the Olympics also resulted in:

- Australia welcoming thousands of Hungarian refugees who were fleeing the Soviet-backed government
- Hungarian athletes defecting to Australia
- A Ukrainian stewardess, working on a Russian ship that had brought athletes to Melbourne, was hiding in the homes of Ukrainian immigrants until the ship had left Australia’s shores. Nina Paranyuk’s request for asylum was later granted. In July 1957, the KGB in Moscow included Paranyuk on its list of Soviet people who were political enemies of the state and she was sentenced to death.<sup>24</sup>

**British nuclear weapons tests, 1952–63**



↑ **Source 6.28** Scientist John L Stanier in protective clothing showing a camera also protected in a special plastic cover at Maralinga, South Australia in 1956. Britain conducted seven nuclear test blasts between 1956 and 1963 at the site.

**FOCUS  
QUESTION 6.3**

What does Source 6.28 suggest about the safety aspects of the way in which the nuclear tests were conducted?

The nuclear arms race between the major powers found its way to Australia when the Federal Government agreed to allow Britain to conduct its nuclear weapons development tests here. Between 1952 and 1963, Britain conducted 12 nuclear tests at the following locations:

- 3 at Monte Bello Islands, Western Australia
- 2 at Emu Fields, South Australia
- 7 at Maralinga, South Australia.

The explosive yields (size of the explosion) of these tests were similar in size to the atomic weapons used on the Japanese cities of Hiroshima and Nagasaki.<sup>25</sup>

In 1953, Prime Minister Menzies explained his government's reasoning.

**Source 6.29**

If the experiments are not to be conducted in Australia with all our natural advantages for this purpose we are contracting out of the common defence of the free world. No risk is involved in the matter. The greatest risk is that we may become inferior in potential military strength to the potential of the enemy.

Quoted in Nick Richardson, *1956 the year Australia welcomed the world*, Scribe, Melbourne, 2019, p. 85.

In 1954, Prime Minister Menzies agreed to allow Maralinga, situated 1000 kilometres from Adelaide, to become a permanent site for the British testing. In 1957, he told Parliament:

**Source 6.30**

**FOCUS  
QUESTION 6.4**

Examine Source 6.30. What were Prime Minister Menzies' reasons for allowing nuclear tests in Australia?

Our cooperation with the United Kingdom in the Long Range Weapons Establishment has been both dramatic and productive. We know how much importance the United Kingdom attaches to this venture. Our effort in relation to it will be maintained vigorously at about the existing level for at least some years to come.

R. G. Menzies, 'Australian Defence Ministerial Statement', April 4 1957, Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet website.<sup>26</sup>

Britain began its nuclear testing program in Australia during the time of the Korean War. Historian Nick Richardson detected 'a scent of national pride that the United Kingdom had chosen Australia for the "honour" of testing its bombs'.<sup>27</sup> Indeed, in 1952 when the tests were announced, 52 per cent of Australians approved. However, by 1956, support had dropped to 42 per cent, with many people concerned about exposure to radioactive fallout. Then, 350 Australian scientists called for a ban on the tests in view of 'the threat facing humanity through the development of nuclear weapons'.<sup>28</sup> Additional opposition to the tests came from the Australian Council of Trade Unions and Labor Party leader Arthur Calwell, who promised that if he was elected, no money would be allocated for nuclear tests.<sup>29</sup>

## A scientist's perspective

Dr Lyn Tynan examined aspects of the Nuclear Testing Program for her science PhD and posits the reason Prime Minister Menzies agreed to allow the British to conduct tests on Australian soil.

At the time, Menzies [had] just been re-elected. He had been Prime Minister for 10 months, so Menzies said yes for a varied number of reasons. They weren't just sycophantic [sucking up to] reasons. Australia was looking for post-war security and saw this as a chance to have protection from Britain again. Australia had just discovered its uranium, so by having the testing here it opened up a potential market for further uranium exports. So there were actually many different reasons to Menzies approving the testing.

Ross Turner, 'Maralinga nuclear tests 60 years on: what do we know now?', September 27 2016, NITV website.<sup>30</sup>

### Source 6.31



↑ Source 6.32 Australian PM Robert Menzies outside 10 Downing Street, England, in 1956

## USING HISTORICAL SOURCES AS EVIDENCE 6.15

1. Prime Minister Menzies was renowned as being an Anglophile (a lover of all things British). In Source 6.31, what does Dr Lyn Tynan mean when she describes his reasons for allowing nuclear testing as not just being for 'sycophantic reasons'?
2. What two reasons does Tynan provide to explain Menzies' agreeing to nuclear testing in Australia?

On witnessing the first of a new set of nuclear tests on the Montebello Islands, 110 kilometres off the Western Australia coast in 1956, Australian radio journalist Norman Banks described it as 'the most exciting thing I'd seen in my life'.<sup>31</sup> Banks told his listeners:

This is purely a defensive weapon. The potential enemy, the Reds, have been engaged in a Cold War and it's up to us to make certain they don't get away from us. We must keep abreast with their atomic development ... it is part of the price of preserving the democratic way of life.

Quoted in Nick Richardson, *1956 the year Australia welcomed the world*, Scribe, Melbourne, 2019, pp. 85-89.

### Source 6.33

## The legacy of Australian nuclear testing

Indigenous people living in the region at the time of the Emu Field tests in 1953 were affected by exposure to 'a black cloud' which caused illness, blindness and children being born with 'significant physical problems'.<sup>32</sup>

During the 1960s, the British conducted two clean-ups of the contaminated Maralinga site which were deemed to be ineffectual. (A further clean-up in the late 1990s resulted in the creation of a huge pile containing 400 000 cubic metres of plutonium contaminated soil.)

The 1984 Royal Commission into British Nuclear Tests in Australia during the 1950s and 1960s was established in response to growing concerns about the safety standards of the

nuclear trials, especially with regard to the protection of people from ionising radiation, as well as the disposal of radioactive substances and toxic materials.

### The Cold War at a personal level

While much of the impact of the Cold War in Australia played out on the political, strategic and military stages, some individuals experienced it at a very personal level.

Like Mr Atkin whom we met earlier, some Australians saw communism as a means by which to improve the lives of working men and women; to reduce the gap between the ‘haves’ and ‘have nots’ through the redistribution of wealth. The communist dictum: ‘From each according to his ability, to each according to his needs’ appealed to many. One such person was the father of a boy called Patrick Brislan. Brislan senior was a staunch member of the Australian Communist Party and was elected to the Central Committee in 1948. So taken with Communism, Brislan proudly gave his first-born, Patrick, a second name – Stalin.

Because of his family’s communist connections and of course his name, Patrick became the victim of the post-war ‘anti-communist frenzy’ in Australia, suffering physical and verbal abuse throughout his early years. It was only when the Soviet Communist Party secretary, Khrushchev, denounced and discredited Stalin and his reign of terror in 1956 that Patrick’s disillusioned father rethought his decision and ‘Patrick Stalin’ became ‘Patrick Sean’.<sup>33</sup>

## 6.9 Chapter summary

Here are some dot-points for you to consider and add to:

### Continuity

- The Cold War was an ongoing influence on Australia in the decades after World War II.
- Australia remained an active member of the United Nations.
- The Liberal–Country Party under Prime Minister Robert Menzies remained in power.
- Communism was a divisive issue at the political level.

### Change

- Australia’s isolated position in Southeast Asia did not prevent incidents of Cold War tensions from reaching its shores.
- Compulsory National Service was reintroduced in 1951.
- Many countries in Asia sought independence from colonial rule.

## 6.10 End-of-chapter activities

### Consolidating your understanding

Complete the following questions to help revise the key events, ideas, perspectives and experiences of Australia and the Cold War.

### Evaluating historical significance

1. Describe the role of the United Nations.
2. Identify the countries that were former European colonies in Southeast Asia.
3. How did the Menzies Government try to ban the Australian Communist Party?
4. Why was the term 'Cold War' used to describe the conflict between the United States and its Allies on the one hand, and communist states on the other?
5. Why was a National Service Scheme introduced in 1951?
6. How did the Cold War impact Australian society in the 1950s?

### Constructing an argument: essay writing

Explain why Australia was drawn into the global conflicts of the Cold War. Use evidence to support your response.

### Extension reading

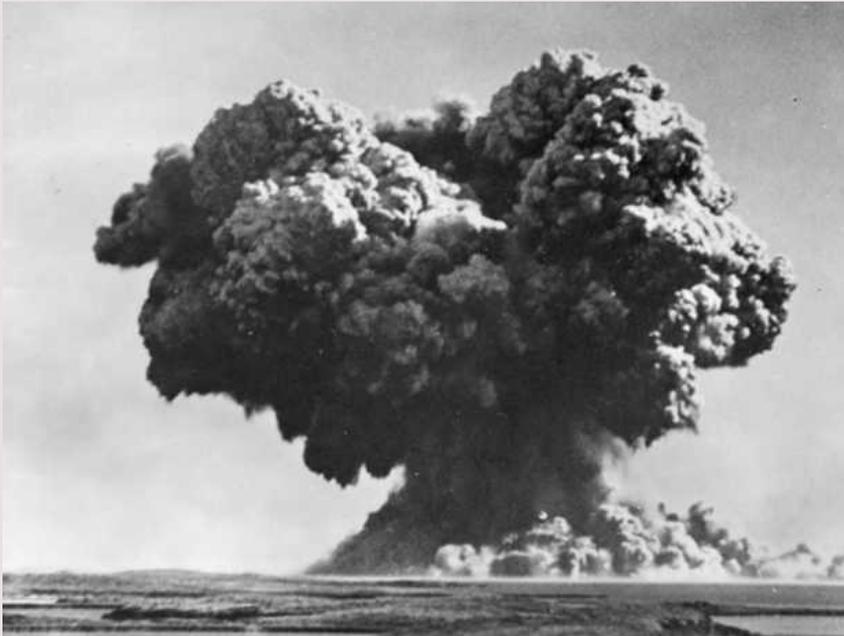
Peter Edwards, *Australia and the Vietnam War*, Australian War Memorial, 2014.

The early chapters in this book discuss the broader implications of the Cold War.

Milton Osborne *Southeast Asia: An introductory History* (12th edn) Allen & Unwin Sydney, 2016.

The middle third of this book covers the material on the end of colonialism.

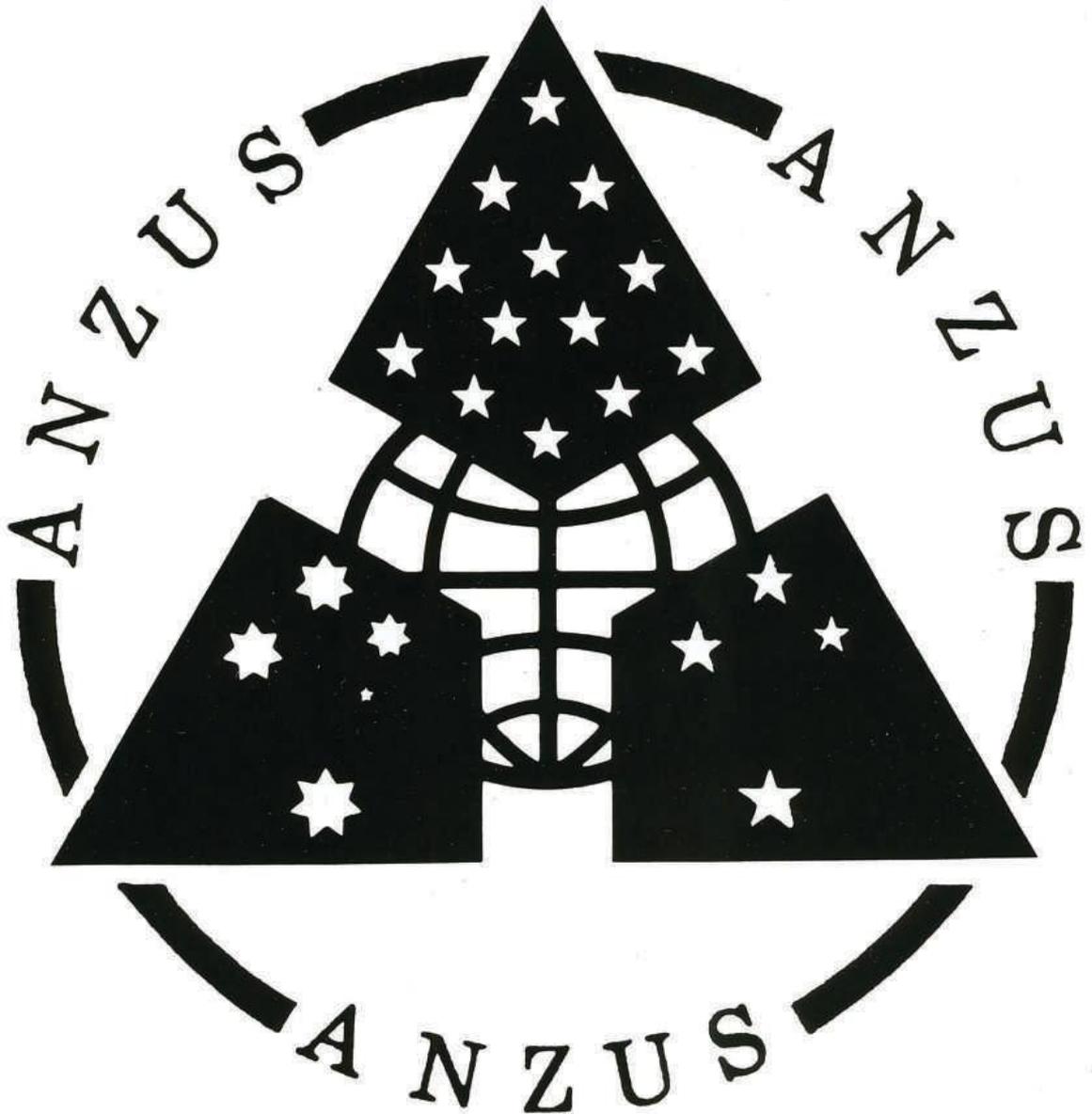
John Murphy, *Harvest of Fear: A History of Australia's Vietnam War*, Allen & Unwin, Sydney, 1993.



↑ **Source 6.34** A mushroom cloud from Britain's first atomic weapon detonation in 1952 in the Monte Bello Islands, Western Australia

# CHAPTER 7

## Australia commits



## Chapter timeline

World events	Date	Australian events
Korean War	1950–53	Australia was part of a United Nations force made up of 23 countries defending South Korea against the communist-backed North 17 000 Australians served 340 died 1216 wounded
Malayan Emergency	1950–60	Australia was part of the British-led Commonwealth force countering communist insurgency. Other countries involved were: Malaya, New Zealand, Britain, and the Nepalese Gurkha units within the British army. 7000 Australians served 39 died 27 wounded
Indonesian Confrontation	1963–66	As part of the Far East Strategic Reserve, Australia joined Britain and other Commonwealth countries sending troops to secure the Malaysian border with Indonesia on the island of Borneo. Unknown number of Australians served 23 died 8 wounded
Vietnam War	1962–73	Australia supported the Republic of South Vietnam against communist North Vietnam. Other Allied countries involved were: the United States, New Zealand, Thailand, the Philippines and South Korea. 60 000 Australians served 521 died 3000 wounded

## 7.1 Introduction

### INQUIRY QUESTION

How did the Australian military respond to the combination of independence movements and Cold War tensions in the Southeast Asian region?

In Chapter 6, we saw how the Cold War played out in Australia. In this chapter, we look at Australia's involvement at an international level against a backdrop of escalating tensions in Southeast Asia, including the ways in which the government sought to bolster the country's security through the ANZUS and SEATO alliances. We will also consider the thinking that underscored the government's policy on military commitment, and the overseas conflicts to which Australia committed.

## 7.2 International obligations and shifting alliances: ANZUS and SEATO

### INQUIRY QUESTION

What new military alliances did Australia become involved with during this period? What were the implications of these alliances?

Until 1941, Australia had relied on its relationship with Britain for its defence. This situation changed with the Japanese advance into Southeast Asia, its invasion of New Guinea and the bombing of Darwin. As Britain was still fully involved with the war in Europe, Australia's traditional reliance on Britain for defence was tested. In 1941, Prime Minister Curtin had no qualms in telling Australians that Australia now 'looks to America'.<sup>1</sup> As the Cold War progressed, the strategic ties to the United States became increasingly important.

### The ANZUS Treaty



↑ **Source 7.1** In 1952, Lieutenant-General Sydney Rowell (left), Australian Chief of General Staff, Major-General William Gentry, New Zealand Chief of General Staff and Admiral Arthur Radford, US Commander in Chief Pacific, gather in Honolulu for the first meeting of ANZUS military representatives

When Robert Menzies led the Liberal Party to victory in 1949, he remained committed to treaties with Britain. These were invoked in Australia's involvement in Malaya (see Section 7.5). However, his Foreign Minister, Percy Spender, was more concerned with communism in Asia. He saw the beginning of the Korean War and the negotiation of a peace treaty with Japan as an opportunity to form, with New Zealand, a limited regional security agreement with the United States. An extract from the ANZUS Treaty is given in Source 7.2.

SECURITY TREATY BETWEEN AUSTRALIA, NEW ZEALAND,  
AND THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

THE PARTIES TO THIS TREATY,

REAFFIRMING their faith in the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations and their desire to live in peace with all peoples and all Governments, and desiring to strengthen the fabric of peace in the Pacific Area,

NOTING that the United States already has arrangements pursuant to which its armed forces are stationed in the Philippines, and has armed forces and administrative responsibilities in the Ryukyus, and upon the coming into force of the Japanese Peace Treaty may also station armed forces in and about Japan to assist in the preservation of peace and security in the Japan Area,

RECOGNIZING that Australia and New Zealand as members of the British Commonwealth of Nations have military obligations outside as well as within the Pacific Area,

DESIRING to declare publicly and formally their sense of unity, so that no potential aggressor could be under the illusion that any of them stand alone in the Pacific Area, and

DESIRING further to coordinate their efforts for collective defense for the preservation of peace and security pending the development of a more comprehensive system of regional security in the Pacific Area,

THEREFORE DECLARE AND AGREE as follows:

Article I: The Parties undertake, as set forth in the Charter of the United Nations, to settle any international disputes in which they may be involved by peaceful means in such a manner that international peace and security and justice are not endangered and to refrain in their international relations from the threat or use of force in any manner inconsistent with the purposes of the United Nations.

Article II: In order more effectively to achieve the objective of this Treaty the Parties separately and jointly by means of continuous and effective self-help and mutual aid will maintain and develop their individual and collective capacity to resist armed attack.

Article III: The Parties will consult together whenever in the opinion of any of them the territorial integrity, political independence or security of any of the Parties is threatened in the Pacific.

Article IV: Each Party recognizes that an armed attack in the Pacific Area on any of the Parties would be dangerous to its own peace and safety and declares that it would act to meet the common danger in accordance with its constitutional processes.

Any such armed attack and all measures taken as a result thereof shall be immediately reported to the Security Council of the United Nations. Such measures shall be terminated when the Security Council has taken the measures necessary to restore and maintain international peace and security.

*Continued...*

...Continued

Article V: For the purpose of Article IV, an armed attack on any of the Parties is deemed to include an armed attack on the metropolitan territory of any of the Parties, or on the island territories under its jurisdiction in the Pacific or on its armed forces, public vessels or aircraft in the Pacific.

Article VI: This Treaty does not affect and shall not be interpreted as affecting in any way the rights and obligations of the Parties under the Charter of the United Nations or the responsibility of the United Nations for the maintenance of international peace and security.

[The remaining articles VII to XI are concerned with mechanisms of implementation.]

Appendix B – *The ANZUS Treaty, 1952*, Parliament of Australia website.<sup>2</sup>

Historian Robert O’Neil describes conflicting opinions on the ANZUS Treaty. (Note: Harry Truman was the US President from 1945 to 1953.)

### Source 7.3

The British Government was not pleased by Australia’s realignment as an ally of the United States, and quietly tried to discourage the Americans from going this far. But Truman felt obliged to Australia for its support in Korea, and he also recalled the stout performance of the Australian army when he was in France in 1918 as a captain of artillery. He silenced US secretary of state Dean Acheson’s doubts about the wisdom of yet another alliance by telling him that in a crisis, Australians were good people to have alongside the United States.

John Blaxland, Michael Kelly, Liam Brewin Higgins (Ed) *In From the Cold, Reflections on Australia’s Korean War*, ANU Press, Canberra, 2020.

Source 7.4 depicts the alliance in this way:



↑ Source 7.4 ANZUS Pact, Cold War, The Encyclopedia of New Zealand, 27 September 1952, p. 2

## USING HISTORICAL SOURCES AS EVIDENCE 7.1

1. Examine Source 7.2. Summarise the main points made in each of the items of the section before the actual Articles. (Note: this is called the 'Preamble')
2. Which of the Articles mentions the United Nations? What is the common theme in these Articles?
3. Examine Sources 7.3 and 7.4. What was the attitude of the British to the ANZUS Treaty?
4. Where did opposition in the United States come from?
5. According to Robert O'Neil in Source 7.3, what reasons did President Truman give for supporting the ANZUS Treaty?

## Southeast Asia Treaty Organization (SEATO)

The Treaty of the Southeast Asia Treaty Organization (SEATO) was signed in Manila, the capital of the Philippines, on 8 September 1954. The Treaty's title reflected the name of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), which was a specifically anti-communist treaty to defend Western Europe against possible Soviet aggression. The essence of the SEATO Treaty can be seen in its Charter.

### The Pacific Charter

The delegates of the United States, Great Britain, France, Australia, New Zealand, Pakistan, Thailand and the Philippines,

- Desiring to establish a firm basis for common action to maintain peace and security in Southeast Asia and the Southwest Pacific;
- Convinced that common action to this end, in order to be worthy and effective, must be inspired by the highest principles of justice and liberty; Do hereby proclaim:
- First, in accordance with provisions of the United Nations Charter, they uphold the principle of equal rights and self-determination of peoples, and they will earnestly strive by every peaceful means to promote the self-government and to secure the independence of all countries whose peoples desire in and are able to undertake its responsibilities;
- Second, they are each prepared to continue taking effective practical measures to ensure conditions favourable to the orderly achievement of the foregoing purposes in accordance with their constitutional processes;
- Third, they will continue to cooperate in the economic, social and cultural fields in order to promote higher living standards, economic progress and social well-being in this region;
- Fourth, as declared in the Southeast Asia Collective Defence Treaty, they are determined to prevent or counter by appropriate means any attempt in the treaty area to subvert their freedom or to destroy their sovereignty or territorial integrity. Proclaimed at Manila, this eighth day of September, 1954.

'Full Text of the S.E.A.T.O. Treaty', 8 September 1954,  
Australian Politics.com website.<sup>3</sup>

### Source 7.5

#### FOCUS QUESTIONS 7.1

1. Examine Source 7.5. List the nations mentioned that are *not* in Southeast Asia.
2. Which Southeast Asian nations are not included in the nations who have signed this treaty?
3. What reasons might there be for excluding some of these nations? (Hint: You might need to do some research on their situation at this time.)

## FOCUS QUESTION 7.2

Examine Source 7.6.  
Explain the symbolism  
used in this stamp.



← **Source 7.6** A US stamp issued in 1960 captured the aspirations of SEATO

### The 1957 Australian Defence Policy review

Historian Peter Edwards, in his 2014 book, *Australia and the Vietnam War: The Essential History*, reveals the Federal Government's thinking on the Cold War and its implications for Australia and the region. In 1957, there was a major review of Australia's defence policy. Prime Minister Menzies announced a greater shift towards the United States as the principal ally. Australia's forces would be organised 'to fit ourselves for close cooperation with the United States in the Southeast Asian area'.<sup>4</sup> In practical terms, 'military equipment would, as far as possible, be standardised with the United States rather than with Britain'.<sup>5</sup> In his speech, Menzies reiterated the following points:

- 'the free countries of South-East Asia' (South Vietnam, Laos, Cambodia, Thailand and Malaya) should not fall to 'communist aggression'
- the importance of SEATO
- the importance of the United States' military strength.<sup>6</sup>

### The decline of SEATO as a military organisation

Although SEATO was used by Australia and the United States as a justification for military involvement in Vietnam (see Section 7.6), most of the nations involved had diverse aims. It gradually became ineffective and was finally dissolved on 30 June 1977. However, the Treaty was more successful in cultural, educational and scientific areas, including the creation of:

- a Graduate School of Engineering in Thailand
- the Cholera Research Laboratories in Bangkok and Bangladesh
- a SEATO literary award.<sup>7</sup>

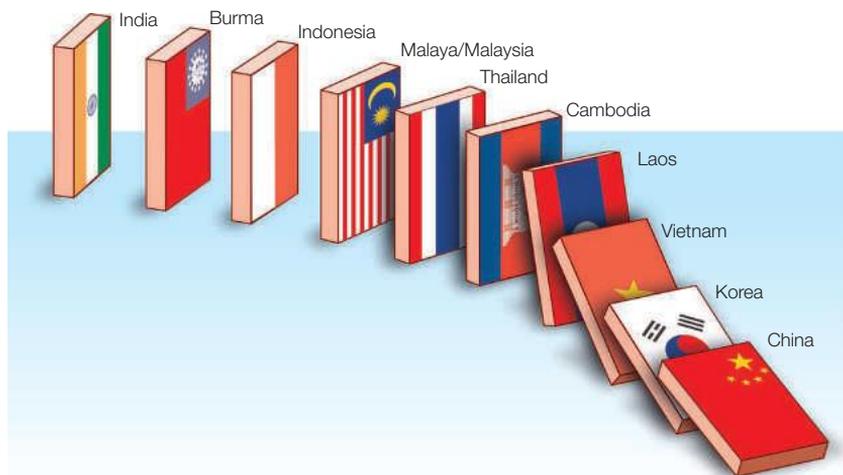
## FOCUS QUESTION 7.3

What were the outcomes  
of the Defence Policy  
Review?

## 7.3 Australia's Cold War conflicts

### INQUIRY QUESTION

Why did Australia become involved in Cold War conflicts?



↑ **Source 7.7** The Domino Theory

The Domino Theory and the Doctrine of Forward Defence became the theoretical underpinnings of the Australian Government's policy on Cold War conflicts in the region.

### The Domino Theory

Originating with US President Truman during the Second World War and used as a justification for supporting the French in the First Indochina War, the Domino Theory came to dominate US thinking on Southeast Asia for decades. The theory was clearly articulated at a press conference on 7 April 1954, when the US President, Dwight D. Eisenhower, responded to a question about communist activity in Southeast Asia.

Q. Robert Richards, Copley Press:

Mr. President, would you mind commenting on the strategic importance of Indochina to the free world? I think there has been, across the country, some lack of understanding on just what it means to us.

THE PRESIDENT:

You have, of course, both the specific and the general when you talk about such things. First of all, you have the specific value of a locality in its production of materials that the world needs. Then you have the possibility that many human beings pass under a dictatorship that is inimical [detrimental] to the free world.

*Continued...*

**Source 7.8**

...Continued

Finally, you have broader considerations that might follow what you would call the 'falling domino' principle. You have a row of dominoes set up, you knock over the first one and what will happen to the last one is the certainty that it will go over very quickly. So you could have a beginning of a disintegration that would have the most profound influences.

Now, with respect to the first one, two of the items from this particular area that the world uses are tin and tungsten. They are very important. There are others, of course, the rubber plantations and so on. Then with respect to more people passing under this [Communist] domination, Asia, after all, has already lost some 450 million of its peoples to the Communist dictatorship [of China], and we simply can't afford greater losses.

But when we come to the possible sequence of events, the loss of Indochina, of Burma, of Thailand, of the Peninsula, and Indonesia following, now you begin to talk about areas that not only have multiple disadvantages that you suffer through loss of materials, sources of materials, but now you are talking really about millions and millions and millions of people.

Finally, the geographical position achieved thereby does many things. It turns the so-called island defensive chain of Japan, Formosa, of the Philippines and to the southward; it moves in to threaten Australia and New Zealand. So, the possible consequences of the loss are just incalculable to the free world.

President Eisenhower's News Conference, 'Public Papers of the Presidents', 7 April 1954.<sup>8</sup>

## USING HISTORICAL SOURCES AS EVIDENCE 7.2

1. Examine Source 7.8. What are President Eisenhower's main concerns about the possibility of communist expansion in Southeast Asia?
2. Why is Eisenhower concerned about the loss of millions of people?
3. How does he see this impacting Australia?
4. What is Eisenhower's perspective on the strategic importance of Indochina to the free world?

## The Doctrine of Forward Defence

At its simplest, the policy of Forward Defence was that it was better to '[fight] the enemy up there before we have to fight them here'.<sup>9</sup> However, historian Peter Edwards believes it was a policy that also 'struck a sensible balance'<sup>10</sup> between Australia and its allies and the new nations in its region, as well as between 'Australia's financial and military resources and its overseas commitments'.<sup>11</sup>

Sources 7.9 and 7.10 are extracts from works by military historians Peter Edwards and Ashley Ekins, reflecting on the effects of this doctrine.

Source 7.9 is from an opinion piece that Edwards wrote in 2017 for the *New York Times*. He explains to an American readership what Australia's 'forward defense' policy was about and the rationale for Australia's military commitment in Southeast Asia.

As Menzies saw it, the risk in American policy was not strategic overreach but isolationism, and what an American withdrawal from Asia in the face of defeat would mean for Australia and its neighbors ...

Source 7.9

The crucial step, it seemed, was to ensure American commitment: Once that was achieved, victory would be certain. Australia's 'forward defense' strategy after 1945 was to make small, but effective, military commitments in order to keep both Britain and the United States, which Menzies called 'our great and powerful friends,' committed to Southeast Asia.

Peter Edwards, 'What Was Australia Doing in Vietnam?', 4 August 2017, New York Times website.<sup>12</sup>

### USING HISTORICAL SOURCES AS EVIDENCE 7.3

1. Examine Source 7.9. What is American 'isolationism' and why does Peter Edwards see it as a concern for Menzies?
2. According to Edwards, what was Menzies' goal?

Source 7.10 is an article by Ashley Ekins that appeared in a recent Australian War Memorial exhibition, *Impressions: Australians in Vietnam*.

The cornerstone of Australia's defence planning in the early 1960s was 'forward defence', a concept which complemented the US policy of 'containment' of Communism in south-east[sic] Asia and embraced Australia's obligations under the South-East Asia Treaty Organisation (SEATO).

Source 7.10

Ashley Ekins, 'Impressions: Australians in Vietnam', Official History Unit, Australian War Memorial website.<sup>13</sup>

### USING HISTORICAL SOURCES AS EVIDENCE 7.4

1. Examine Source 7.10. What does Ashley Ekins mean by the US policy of 'containment'?
2. Explain how Australia's Forward Defence policy complemented US 'containment'?

In a 1964 address to the NSW Liberal Council, Prime Minister Robert Menzies set out his government's approach to Australia's strategic interests in Southeast Asia.

We have alliances, we have arrangements, we have mutual advantages and obligations with some of the great countries of the world. We have with the United States, the South-East Asian Treaty and ANZUS, the ANZUS Treaty, the significance of which to Australia has never yet clearly been understood, and on top of that we have Great Britain in the South-East

Source 7.11

*Continued...*

...Continued

Asian Treaty and Great Britain in Malaysia and our obligations willingly accepted in relation to Malaysia, our constant opposition to aggression, wherever it comes primarily Communist aggression from the North and aggression, at present, unhappily, from Indonesia. And we stand against it and we have had enough sense to get firm friends who stand with us.

Robert Menzies, (speech), 23 October 1964, 'PM Transcripts', Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet website.<sup>14</sup>

In a 1966 pamphlet, the Labor politician Clyde Holding asked and then answered 45 questions about Australia's involvement in Vietnam.

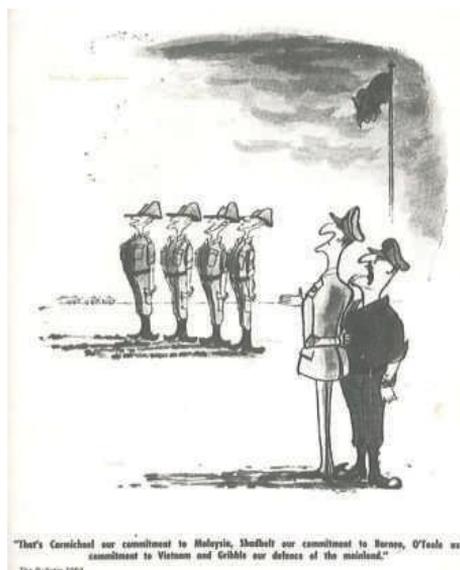
### Source 7.12

#### Question 45. How should Australia stand with Asia?

Australia must end the present government's apathy about Asia. We must set out by economic aid, cultural exchange and other peaceful means to establish friendly relations with all the nations of Asia. Australia must end the wishful thinking that we can survive in Asia merely on the basis of alliances with Great Britain and America. We must strike out on our own path – the path of peace and friendship with the whole of Asia.

Clyde Holding, 'The moral and political issues involved in Vietnam and conscription', (pamphlet), 1966, Reason in Revolt website.<sup>15</sup>

Did Australia have the military capability to manage all these alliances? In November 1964, Prime Minister Menzies announced the reintroduction of National Service. A 1964 *Bulletin* cartoon commented on this action.



### RESEARCH TASK 7.1

Read Menzies full 'defence review' speech to Parliament from November 10 1964. Explain the significance of this source.

← **Source 7.13** The caption reads 'That's Carmichael our commitment to Malaysia, Shadbolt our commitment to Borneo, O'Toole our commitment to Vietnam and Gribble our defence of the mainland.'

## USING HISTORICAL SOURCES AS EVIDENCE 7.5

What does Source 7.13 say about the strength of Australia's Defence Forces?

### 7.4 The Korean War, 1950–1953

#### INQUIRY QUESTION

How did Australia's obligation to the United Nations influence our commitment to the Korean War?



↑ **Source 7.14** The view of United Nations forces, travelling in trucks, crossing the 38th Parallel as they withdraw from Pyongyang, the North Korean capital, 1950

#### Introduction

The Korean Peninsula had been occupied by Japan since 1910. Following the defeat of the Japanese in World War II in 1945, the United States and the Soviet Union, by mutual agreement, divided the Korean Peninsula between the US-backed South and the Soviet-backed North at the 38th parallel.

According to Michael Robinson, Professor Emeritus of East Asian Studies and History at Indiana University:

The ultimate objective was for the Soviet Union and the United States to leave, and let the Koreans figure it out. The trouble was that the Cold War intervened ... And everything that was tried to create a middle ground or to try to reunify the peninsula [was] thwarted by both the Soviet Union and the United States not wanting to give in to the other.

**Source 7.15**

Sarah Pruitt, 'Why are North and South Korea divided?', 15 January 2019, History.com website.<sup>16</sup>

In 1948, the United States called for all Koreans to decide on the future of the Korean Peninsula through a United Nations-sponsored vote. After the North refused to participate, the South decided to form its own government, the Republic of South Korea. The North followed suit, forming the Democratic Republic of North Korea.<sup>17</sup>

The single party dictatorship of North Korea was supported by the Soviet Union and China, while the democratic South's principal supporter was the United States. Ten Soviet-aligned states supported the communist North, while 28 non-aligned states supported the South.

Tensions between the two zones escalated as the two armies faced off on either side of the 38th parallel. At dawn on 25 June 1950, an estimated 75 000 North Korean troops invaded the South, forcing a hasty southern retreat.<sup>18</sup> This act of aggression was immediately condemned by the fledgling United Nations, which stated:

**Source 7.16**

Having noted from the report of the United Nations Commission on Korea that the authorities in North Korea have neither ceased hostilities nor withdrawn their armed forces to the 38th parallel, and that urgent military measures are required to restore international peace and security.

It was recommended that:

Members of the United Nations furnish such assistance to the Republic of [South] Korea as may be necessary to repel the armed attack and to restore international peace and security in the area.

UN Security Council, Security Council resolution 83 1950, 'Complaint of aggression upon the Republic of Korea', 27 June 1950, United Nations High Commissioner For Refugees website.<sup>19</sup>

### ***DID YOU KNOW?***

The Resolution was only able to pass the Security Council because the Soviet Union was boycotting it over the failure to recognise a Chinese Communist representative on the United Nations. If present, the Soviet Union would have used its power of veto.

## **The United States responds**

Source 7.17 is an extract from the response of US President Harry S. Truman on 27 June 1950.

**Source 7.17**

In Korea the Government forces, which were armed to prevent border raids and to preserve internal security, were attacked by invading forces from North Korea. The Security Council of the United Nations called upon the invading troops to cease hostilities and to withdraw to the 38th parallel. This they have not done, but on the contrary have pressed the attack. The Security Council called upon all members of the United Nations to render every assistance to the United Nations in the execution of this resolution. In these circumstances I have ordered United States air and sea forces to give the Korean Government troops cover and support.

The attack upon Korea makes it plain beyond all doubt that Communism has passed beyond the use of subversion to conquer independent nations and will now use armed invasion and war. It has defied the orders of the

Security Council of the United Nations issued to preserve international peace and security.

'President Truman's Statement on the Situation in Korea', (press release), 27 June 1950, DocsTeach website.<sup>20</sup>

## Australia commits

Australia quickly rallied to the United Nations' call. Sources 7.18–7.20 are extracts from the parliamentary record, Hansard, recorded on 6 July 1950.

### Robert Menzies: Prime Minister

To sum up: These events, which seem so remote in point of space, are not remote in point of significance. They are a reminder that the peace of the world is threatened and that, as a British and democratic nation, we must be not only willing, but also ready. As we are members of the British Commonwealth of Nations, we must be prepared to stand by our sister nations. As we are subscribers not only in the letter but also in the spirit to the Charter of the United Nations, we must be ready to give force and meaning to the letter and spirit of the Charter. Preparation is all. And no nation can be prepared overnight. Time does not wait for us; nor does the malice of aggressive power; nor does the arrow that flies by night. I therefore, on behalf of His Majesty's Government in Australia, call upon Australians to give support, by enlistment, to Australia's naval, military and air forces here and now. All our services need recruits. Preparation that comes too late is but virtue wasted. Contrary to the impression of some good people, the forces of peace always need strengthening.

So that there will be no shadow of misunderstanding, let me state the position of the Government and, as I hope and believe, that of the Opposition, quite simply.

We are for peace. We do not understand aggression, but we will resist it with all we have and are. We are, with all our imperfections, a Christian nation, believing in man's brotherhood, anxious to live at peace with our neighbour, willing to go the second mile to help him if he is less fortunate than we are. We do not seek to tell another country how it shall live or how it shall govern itself. We intervene in no domestic dispute. But just as we seek the deep, still waters of universal peace, so do we know from bitter experience that the waves of war sweep right around the world.

If there is to be a world organization for peace there must be a world acceptance of the responsibilities to maintain it. In one breath to speak of our allegiance to the Charter, and in the next to ignore the resolution of the Security Council would be either hypocrisy or cowardice, of neither of which has Australia ever been adjudged guilty.

Robert Menzies, 'House of Representatives Question Korea Speech', 6 July 1950, Parliament of Australia website.<sup>21</sup>

Source 7.18

**Source 7.19**

**Ben Chifley: Leader of the Opposition**

That this House, having before it the Charter of the United Nations and the recent resolutions of the Security Council in relation to Korea, approves of the action taken by the Government in placing at the disposal of the United Nations the forces indicated in the statement of the Prime Minister.

I hope, as we all do, that the action being taken by the United Nations will be successful. It will be a demonstration to the world, and to those who might become aggressors, that there exists a body of 59 nations determined to maintain peace. There are always those who are anxious to make war, and who laud with great eloquence the heroism associated with battle, but the great masses of people throughout the world abhor the very thought of war. The Prime Minister has said that he knows of no reason why the action taken in Korea by the United Nations, or taken according to its advice, could lead to a third world war. I agree emphatically with him. I think that the action which has been taken under the auspices of the United Nations is more likely to prevent a third world war than to cause it. I do not believe that the people of any nation in the world seek war. The action that has been taken in the Korean dispute, if it is successful, will prove to the world that the United Nations is something more than a body for passing resolutions. It will prove that when world peace is endangered by a dispute between two countries, the trouble can be settled by mediation and conciliation. It will show that if one or other of the disputing parties is not prepared to conciliate or mediate under the auspices of the United Nations, then the other nations who are members of that organization will play their part in nullifying acts of aggression.

Ben Chifley, 'House of Representatives Question Korea Speech', 6 July 1950, Parliament of Australia website.<sup>22</sup>

**Source 7.20**

**Percy Spender: Minister for External Affairs**

Whilst we are now engaged in trying to repel aggression, we have made it quite plain already, as the United Nations has done, that, if the forces of North Korea are prepared to withdraw beyond the 38th parallel, there is no reason why mediation should not settle the dispute between the governments of the two areas. The situation is not simple, as the right honorable gentleman knows. Notwithstanding every effort that has been made by the United Nations commission in Korea for some years, it has utterly failed to bring the two portions of the country together. That has not been due to any inefficiency or lack of determination on its part. It has been due solely to the fact that North Korea would not agree in any circumstances to participate in any discussions.

Percy Spender, 'House of Representatives Question Korea Speech', July 6 1950, Parliament of Australia website.<sup>23</sup>

## FOCUS QUESTIONS 7.5

1. Define the term 'bipartisan'.
2. In Source 7.20, how does Percy Spender defend the UN's ineffectiveness in bringing the two Koreas together?
3. Examine Sources 7.18–7.20. Complete the following table. Why did Australia commit to the conflict in Korea?

Speaker	Reason	Supporting quote

Already involved in fighting a communist insurgency in Malaya Australia was the first country, following the United States, to commit units from all three military services to Korea. Historian Richard Trembath reflects on the government's thinking.

We were anxious to be seen as very quick to put our cards on the table; we originally only committed air forces and naval forces, but when it was found out in Canberra that Britain was going to commit land forces, we jumped to beat Britain – we actually beat them by about a day or two – to show that we were firm in the alliance with the United States'

Source 7.21

Richard Trembath in 'Australia and the Korean War', 15 April 2016, Government of South Australia Veterans SA website.<sup>24</sup>

### USING HISTORICAL SOURCES AS EVIDENCE 7.6

What reasons does Trembath give for Australia's involvement in the Korean War in Source 7.21?

### Recruitment

In 1951, during the war in Korea, the Australian Government reintroduced compulsory National Service. However, they did not compel National Servicemen in the Army to serve overseas. To increase the numbers of Australian men volunteering for the Regular Army, the government embarked on a recruitment program.

Richard Trembath, describes the 'flood of volunteers' who signed up at re-opened recruitment offices around Australia in 1951.



→ Source 7.22 Korea Force recruiting poster

### Source 7.23

It was an enthusiastic response. I think Korea in some ways was a war which the Australian population understood a little more clearly than it understood Vietnam. The world response was a lot more united. The United Nations was the one calling for action, so it had the mark of being something right to do.

Richard Trembath, 'Australians and the Korean War', 15 April 2016, Government of South Australia Veterans SA website.<sup>25</sup>

## USING HISTORICAL SOURCES AS EVIDENCE 7.7

Examine Source 7.23. Why in Trembath's view were Australian responses to recruitment and involvement in the Korean War 'enthusiastic'?

### The forgotten war

The Korean War pre-dated the 1956 introduction of television into Australia. Unlike the Vietnam War that took place 15 years later, Australians were not confronted with the realities of the war on the nightly TV news. The result was that for many people the war remained remote and was not a consideration in their day-to-day lives, as Source 7.24 attests.

### Source 7.24

It was a war that most Australians ignored, which made it especially difficult for wives and families of servicemen. June White's husband was a parachute jump instructor at RAAF Williamstown who was posted to Japan and Korea in early 1952. The worst part 'was the loneliness & lack of knowledge of what was happening to my man on the other side of the world'. With two preschool aged children, June found it hard to cope. 'Korea was little publicised in day-to-day living', Jean said. 'I can remember being at a party at my sister's house & a woman asked me where my husband was that night. When I told her he was in Korea she asked me what he was doing in that country!'

'Australian Women and War', July 2008, Dept of Veterans Affairs website.<sup>26</sup>

### The war concludes

Hostilities ended with a ceasefire in July 1953. However, subsequent negotiations failed to produce a resolution. As a result, the frontline at the 38th Parallel became the de facto border – where it remains to this day, and the ceasefire continues between the North and the South. It is estimated that more than 2.5 million people lost their lives in this conflict, including a million combat casualties.<sup>27</sup>

## 7.5 The Malayan Emergency and the Indonesian Confrontation, 1950–1963

### INQUIRY QUESTION

Why did Australia become involved in Malaysia and what were the similarities and, as importantly, the differences between this conflict and our involvement in Korea?

Over 150 years, the British had taken control of various Malay States in different ways. However, for the purpose of this account, the term ‘Malaya’ is used to refer to Peninsular Malaya up to 1957. Malaya achieved independence in 1957. Beginning in 1961, the Malayan Prime Minister announced the idea of an extended Malaysia, which would include Singapore, North Borneo, Brunei and Sarawak. In 1965, Singapore broke away from Malaysia to become a separate and sovereign state.



← **Source 7.25** Map of Mainland Malaya in 1950. Adapted from Peter Dennis and Jeffrey Grey, *Emergency and Confrontation: Australia Military Operations in Malaya and Borneo, 1950–1966*, Sydney: Allen & Unwin, 1996, pp. 7–8

The involvement of Australian troops in the Malayan Emergency lasted 13 years, from 1950 to 1963. At the time, it was the longest continuous external military commitment in Australia’s history. Even though it was very important in establishing the nature of Australia’s relationships with Southeast Asia, the Emergency has been largely forgotten, except by those directly involved.

The Emergency arose out of the situation following the Japanese surrender in 1945. Its nature was complicated by the racial mixture in the country, which derived from migration from China and India under British rule. Malays feared domination by the immigrant Chinese; in the 1931 census, there were more Chinese (1 709 392) than Malays (1 644 173). The British policy was that of ‘divide and rule’ to play one racial group off against the other.

Before World War II, some educated Malaysians tried to bring the three races together in an attempt to define a ‘new nationalism’.

**Source 7.26**

to create a real and valid sense of loyalty to Malaya among all races by inspiring in the Malay a national loyalty over and above his natural loyalty to the Sultans, as symbols of his racial history and traditions, and educating him to an adult understanding of his place as a Malayan; and by weaning the non-Malay races from their nostalgia for the homelands of their ancestors, by putting into their hands the real basis of an enduring loyalty.

Cheah, Boon Kheng, *The masked comrades: a study of the communist United Front in Malaya 1945–48*, Times Books International, Singapore, 1979, p.5.

### USING HISTORICAL SOURCES AS EVIDENCE 7.8

1. Which two countries did ‘homeland’ refer to?
2. Examine Source 7.26. What evidence is there that this document was created by Malays?
3. What did they want the Indians and Chinese to give up?
4. What did they want the Indians and Chinese to accept?
5. What are some of the different ways in which Indians and Chinese might have reacted to this?

During the Japanese occupation, the Japanese treated Malays, Indians and Chinese people differently. Most Malays retained their Muslim religion and continued to work the land. However, by the early twentieth century, an educated and secular elite group had developed who were mainly educators and journalists. During the Japanese occupation, some of these elites worked with the Japanese to prepare for independence from the British.

The Japanese conscripted Indians with administrative and engineering skills and many worked alongside Australian prisoners-of-war on the Burma Railway (which was called the ‘Death Railway’ because of the large number of people who died there).

The ones who suffered most under the Japanese Occupation were the Chinese. In the first week of the Japanese occupation of Singapore, the occupiers rounded up the male Chinese population for interrogation. Many were then massacred. Estimates of the number of Chinese massacred range from 5000 to 25 000 people. Many Chinese waged guerrilla war (and worked with the British) against the Japanese. The main organisation of resistance was the Malayan People’s Anti-Japanese Army (MPAJA), which was dominated by Chinese people. A powerful group within the Anti-Japanese Army was the Malayan Communist Party (MCP).

As soon as the Japanese surrendered, the British returned. The economy had been destroyed by the war. During the Japanese occupation, most Malaysians had struggled to survive. To Malaysians, despite having failed to protect Malaya against invasion, the British acted as if nothing had changed and they were still the legitimate rulers. The British also decided to ‘punish’ the elite Malays by turning their backs on the pre-war policy of recognising the sovereignty of the Malay Sultans and the autonomy of the Malay States.

Generally, the British were ineffectual in handling the multiple social and economic problems of post-occupation Malaya. In this chaos, the only organised, well-armed group was the predominantly Chinese MPAJA, which was now dominated by the Malay Communist Party.

Australian military historians Peter Dennis and Jeffrey Grey describe the British return.

The British Military Administration (BMA) that controlled Malaya from September 1945 to April 1946 was ill-prepared for the tasks that confronted it. The sudden collapse of the Japanese created a situation in which an essentially military organisation was charged with restoring Malaya to the normalcy of civilian life. Experienced civil administrators were few and far between, and the BMA quickly developed a reputation for high-handedness and a tolerance for corruption, both among its own number and in the wider community, as business, large and small, began to pick up. Its apparent indifference to the plight of the general community was confirmed by the unilateral decision, only days after the British returned to withdraw the wartime Japanese currency, which overnight impoverished the great majority of the population, reducing them to begging for food and causing widespread bitterness.

Source 7.27

The BMA was unable to provide minimum food rations, especially rice, and seemed incapable of maintaining basic law and order. 'Gangsterism' kidnapping, extortion and piracy flourished, and as the economy stagnated under policies that seemed increasingly designed to squeeze Malaysia for the benefit of the British.

P. Dennis and J. Grey, *Emergency and Confrontation; Australia Military Operations in Malaya and Borneo, 1950–1966*, Allen & Unwin, 1996, pp. 7–8.

### USING HISTORICAL SOURCES AS EVIDENCE 7.9

1. Examine Source 7.27. List the problems the British had to face on their return.
2. According to Peter Dennis and Jeffrey Grey, what were the ways in which the British reacted ineptly to the situation?
3. The quote in Source 7.27 is an extract from the *Official History of the Conflict* and was published jointly with the Australian War Memorial. How might knowing where it came from affect the reliability of the source? Consider both positive and negative factors.

### The beginning of the conflict

The insurgents never numbered more than a few thousand, and their weapons were mainly arms left over from World War II. Therefore they had to resort to guerrilla tactics, such as:

- making their camps in the jungle
- trying to win support by targeting key political figures and sabotaging key installations
- winning the support of the poor Chinese people living on the outskirts of the villages.

The conflict began on 16 June 1948, when three British plantation managers were killed in the northern state of Perak. Two days later, the British enacted emergency laws: first in Perak, and in the following month, throughout Malaya. At first, the British Army seemed unable to prevent these attacks. In early 1950, a village in Perak was burnt and destroyed, as was a police station in Johore, with a large loss of life and police weapons being stolen.

In April 1950, General Sir Harold Briggs was appointed as Director of Operations. One of his tactics was to relocate the 400 000 Chinese and 100 000 Malays living as squatters on the edge of the jungles to what were called 'New Villages'. The aim was to isolate these people from the insurgents in camps. The New Villages were surrounded by barbed wire and police posts, so that people could not make contact or supply food to the insurgents.

## Australian involvement

In early 1950, the Australian Government decided to withdraw its force from the British Commonwealth Occupation Force in Japan (which was an almost totally Australian unit). One purpose of this action was to provide soldiers to act as instructors in the new National Service scheme.

Around the same time (April 1950), the British requested that Australia provide reinforcements for the British air squadrons operating in Malaya in dealing with the Emergency. However, the Australian Government was hesitant to act. Source 7.28 is a summary of the Australian Cabinet's submission to the British Government.

### Source 7.28

It was 'deeply conscious of the serious position that exists in Malaya due to Communist activities in the area' and was anxious to cooperate as fully as possible with Britain, it was wary of the implications of the Defence Committee's recommendations. The despatch of bombers to Malaya, which might be seen as 'committing Australia to a militaristic policy', might run counter to the **Colombo Plan** for economic assistance in South-East Asia which Australia had been instrumental in establishing in January 1950. Second, there might be adverse electoral consequences for the Government once it became known that Australia intended to play an active part in the Malayan Emergency. Third, the Cabinet was by no means sure that British efforts in Malaya would be successful, and preferred not to rush into a situation that might well deteriorate further if the recent communist successes in China encouraged the Chinese in Malaya to throw their support behind the insurgents.

**Colombo Plan** initiated in 1951 to provide cultural, medical and educational assistance to Asian countries. An important activity was supporting Asian students to study in Australian universities.

P. Dennis and J. Grey, *Emergency and Confrontation; Australia Military Operations in Malaya and Borneo, 1950-1966*, Allen & Unwin, 1996, pp. 7–8.

## Using historical source as evidence 7.1

1. Why might military involvement in Malaya have a negative impact on the aims of the Colombo Plan?
2. Examine Source 7.28. What two other reasons did the Government give for not being involved in the Malayan Emergency?

The initial involvement consisted of aircraft doing cargo runs, parachuting troops into regions, carrying out leaflet drops and encouraging Malaysians to support the Government. A major

operation in July 1954 involved five Australian and six British aircraft. These dropped paratroopers (who carried out a ground attack) and bombed some areas. Within 10 days, 181 insurgent camps were destroyed.



↑ **Source 7.29** A bamboo and palm shelter used as a kitchen at a recently abandoned insurgent camp located by Australian soldiers, 15 February 1956

By the end of 1955, the insurgency was so weakened it had no chance of success. However, ‘mopping up’ operations continued for another five years. The work of Australian forces during this time involved patrolling areas against residual insurgents and guarding the perimeters of the New Villages.



← **Source 7.30** Australian soldiers near the Thai border, 1960

## USING HISTORICAL SOURCES AS EVIDENCE 7.10

Make up a list of evidence from Sources 7.27 and 7.28 that supports observations made in the text.

### Winning hearts and minds

**civil war** a war between groups of people within a country, rather than against foreign invaders

In what was essentially a **civil war**, it is important that you do not alienate the people whose support you want. Sources 7.31 and 7.32 illustrate some of the factors involved in this.



← **Source 7.31**

Perak, 1956. As part of their food denial operation against communist terrorists, soldiers from the 2nd Australian Battalion stopped a small car. It is being thoroughly searched by Malayan Police Constables and soldiers before it can continue on its way.



← **Source 7.32** A photograph taken in 1960 shows a truck delivering a load of Christmas presents and food to the children of Kampung Lasah. The truck has been adorned with decorations and a message.

## USING HISTORICAL SOURCES AS EVIDENCE 7.11

1. What do Sources 7.31 and 7.32 show about:
  - a. the difficulties and
  - b. the methods used in trying to win local support?

Source 7.33 is an extract from the memoir of a woman born in Malaya. She is writing about her experiences when she was 16 years old.

It is 1957. As the train pulls in at Gua Musang, (translated, civet cat cave), in the wilderness between the states of Kelantan and Pahang, my two sisters hung out the window in great excitement, for, conspicuous on the platform in digger's hats and flushed faces were our two Australian friends, Bill and Derek, now stationed in the jungles of Pahang as part of the Australian Ground Forces in Malaya ... My father, sympathetic to men in khaki after his own war experiences on the Burma Railway, had brought them home to our place on the West coast. The dark-eyed Derek said the blond Bill was called 'Bluey' in Australia. We thought it was on account of his blue eyes and in private referred to them as Bluey and Black Eyes. They told us about Australia—the open plains, all golden brown under clear blue skies where cowboys rode on horseback chasing thousands of sheep and cattle. One day they disappeared. They had been transferred to this remote jungle outpost on the East Coast where my parents now lived. They must have met my father somewhere and hearing of our journey back to the West coast for study and work had come to see us off. As the train pulled slowly out of the station, Derek produced a small box, a gift of lacy, white handkerchiefs for me ... I was deliriously touched at this meaningful and personal gift. These Australians were so friendly and popular, unlike the British who had been in Malaya before them and who had come back as unwelcomed guests who treated Malaysians like their inferiors.

Source 7.33

E. V. Ratnam, *Memoir A Fall of Rain (excerpt)*, 2021, unpublished manuscript.

### USING HISTORICAL SOURCES AS EVIDENCE 7.12

1. Examine Source 7.33. Identify key experiences of Australian soldiers' involvement in the Emergency in this excerpt. (You will need to locate some of the places named on a map.)
2. Find at least two reasons why Malaysians might have been more accepting of Australians than they were of the British.
3. What does this show about the importance of how Australians behave in foreign countries?

### The Indonesian Confrontation

In 1961, just as the Malayan Emergency was coming to an end, the Malayan Prime Minister Tunku Abdul Rahman announced the idea of an expanded Malaya. He proposed adding Singapore and the former British colonies bordering the Indonesian state of Kalimantan to form a (new) country called Malaysia. This became official in September 1963.



↑ **Source 7.34** Map of Malaysia in 1963, showing main area of confrontation

### USING HISTORICAL SOURCES AS EVIDENCE 7.13

Examine Source 7.34. What were the most likely areas where Indonesia might launch an attack on Malaysia?

To the Indonesians, who had won their own independence from Dutch colonial rule, this seemed to be a return to European – in this case British – influence on their border. This was a reasonable assumption as the Australian forces in Malaya were still under British command, although their involvement was affected by Australian Government policy. At first the Australian Government did not want to get involved militarily in Indonesia, but it was prepared to defend Malaysia, as it now was, against external attacks. By 1965, troops were involved in military conflict across the border between Malaysia and Kalimantan.

At the same time, negotiations were taking place between Indonesia and Malaysia. A peace treaty was signed in Bangkok in August 1966.

## 7.6 The Vietnam War, 1954–1975

### INQUIRY QUESTION

Why did Australia become involved in the conflict in Vietnam?



↑ **Source 7.35** Diggers sitting on an armoured personnel carrier, Ken McFadyen, 1968

## Background

Geographically, Vietnam, together with Laos and Cambodia, formed what was known as the Indochina region of Southeast Asia. In the nineteenth century, the three countries were colonised by the French. An independence movement developed in Vietnam in the 1920s. In 1930 Ho Chi Minh founded the Vietnamese Communist Party and later the same year its name was changed to the Indochinese Communist Party.

During the Japanese occupation of Vietnam in World War II, Ho Chi Minh established the Revolutionary League for the Independence of Vietnam (Viet Minh). Following the defeat of Japan in 1945, Ho Chi Minh proclaimed Vietnam's independence on 2 September. The Viet Minh continued to insist on Vietnam's independence as France tried to reassert control over its colony. The battle for control of Vietnam in what is known as the First Indochina War (known as the 'French War' in Vietnam) began in 1946 and continued for nine years.

## The Élysée Accords, 1950

In an attempt to resolve the conflict and bring reluctant allies – in particular the United States – to their side, the French National Assembly ratified the Élysée Accords in January 1950. The French recognised the independence of its Indochinese colonies, but only as 'associated states' of a French Union with a 'highly restricted degree of "independence"'.<sup>28</sup> France's goal was 'assimilation of the overseas territories into a greater France, inhabited by French citizens and blessed by French culture'.<sup>29</sup>

The result of the agreement was the reinstatement of the former Vietnamese 'playboy' emperor, Bao Dai, who was less popular among the Vietnamese people than Ho Chi Minh. Bao Dai became the first of many heads of government in South Vietnam during the period of the Vietnam War. In Vietnam, this conflict is known as the 'War against America to Save the Nation'.<sup>30</sup>

The partial independence afforded to Vietnam was enough to move the United States from a position of neutrality to a commitment towards the new regime. In justifying why Australia then followed both the United States and Britain into recognition of the Bao Dai Government, Australia's Foreign Minister, Percy Spender, stated that an independent Vietnam under the Viet

Minh would be, in reality, ‘a regime scarcely distinguishable from other Communist satellite governments’<sup>31</sup> while at the same time acknowledging the widely held view that Ho Chi Minh only wanted an independent Vietnam and would resist domination from the Soviet Union and China. However, he also noted that Ho had ‘received his political training in Moscow’.<sup>32</sup>

France, now backed by the United States, was finally defeated after a four-month siege of the French stronghold at Dien Bien Phu in 1954. Australia, too, had begun supporting the French in Vietnam by shipping military supplies. However, these supplies were never used as the warring parties were already in peace talks when the shipment arrived.<sup>33</sup>

The defeat of the French and their allies represented ‘an unprecedented victory of Asia over Europe’.<sup>34</sup>

## The Geneva Accord, 1954

The parties involved in the conflict met in Switzerland in July 1954 and produced the Geneva Accord. This set out the peace terms and the way forward for Vietnam, namely:

- cessation of hostilities
- independence from France
- cessation of foreign involvement in internal affairs
- a temporary division of Vietnam at the 17th Parallel
- neither the North nor the South were to form alliances with outside parties
- mandated unification of the country, based on internationally supervised free elections to take place in July 1956.

South Vietnam and the United States rejected the last two points. Thus, Vietnam remained divided: the North remained under communist control and the South became a nominally democratic republic supported by the United States. In view of this situation, the Viet Minh continued to push into South Vietnam, with the aim of removing the South Vietnamese Administration and unifying the country under a communist government.

### Source 7.36

Concerned about regional instability, the United States became increasingly committed to countering communist nationalists in Indochina. The United States would not pull out of Vietnam for another twenty years.

Office of the Historian, Foreign Service Institute, United States Department of State

## An insurance policy

For Australia, maintaining a US presence in the region was imperative. In 1962, in a show of support for the United States’ increasing commitment to South Vietnam, Australia sent 30 military advisers to help train the South Vietnamese army. During the early 1960s, Australia provided more advisers and also supplied aircraft, military equipment and economic aid. By May 1964, the head of the Australian Embassy in Washington, Alan Renouf, was promoting the benefits of continuing to support Australia’s principal ally in Vietnam.

Our objective should be ... to achieve such an habitual closeness of relations with the United States and sense of mutual alliance that in our time and need, after we have shown all reasonable restraint and good sense, the United States would have little option but to respond as we would want. The problem of Vietnam is one, it seems, where we could ... pick up a lot of credit with the United States for the problem is one to which the United States is deeply committed and in which it genuinely feels it is carrying too much of the load, not so much the physical load which the United States is prepared to bear, as the moral load.

Source 7.37

A1838 – ITEM TS686/4/1 PART 1: ‘Advice to the United States of Australian defence commitments to third parties’, covering 13 November 1963 – 2 June 1965, National Archives of Australia website.<sup>35</sup>

### USING HISTORICAL SOURCES AS EVIDENCE 7.14

1. What is ‘the problem’ of Vietnam?
2. Examine Source 7.37. Why does Alan Renouf see it as important for Australia to support the United States?
3. How could Renouf’s rationale be seen as an ‘insurance policy’ for Australia?
4. What does Renouf mean by ‘the moral load’?

Eleven years later on 13 May 1975, under a direction from Prime Minister Gough Whitlam, a paper was tabled in the House of Representatives. The paper proposed that an objective appraisal should be made of Australia’s military involvement in South Vietnam. Source 7.38 is an extract from this paper.

There were requests for aid of various sorts from South Vietnam to assist in its effort against growing communist insurgency, but the requests for military aid were largely generated by initiatives from the United States. These initiatives were political and not military in motive. The United States did not need the military aid but it did desire the military presence of its friends and allies in order to show to the world that the United States was not alone in its efforts against communism in South East Asia, to show that it was not replacing French colonialism in the area and in order to re-assure Governments indigenous to the Area that members of SEATO were in fact prepared to make a practical contribution to defence against communism.

Source 7.38

‘Australia’s military commitment to Vietnam’, 13 May 1975, PM Transcripts, Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet website.<sup>36</sup>

## USING HISTORICAL SOURCES AS EVIDENCE 7.15

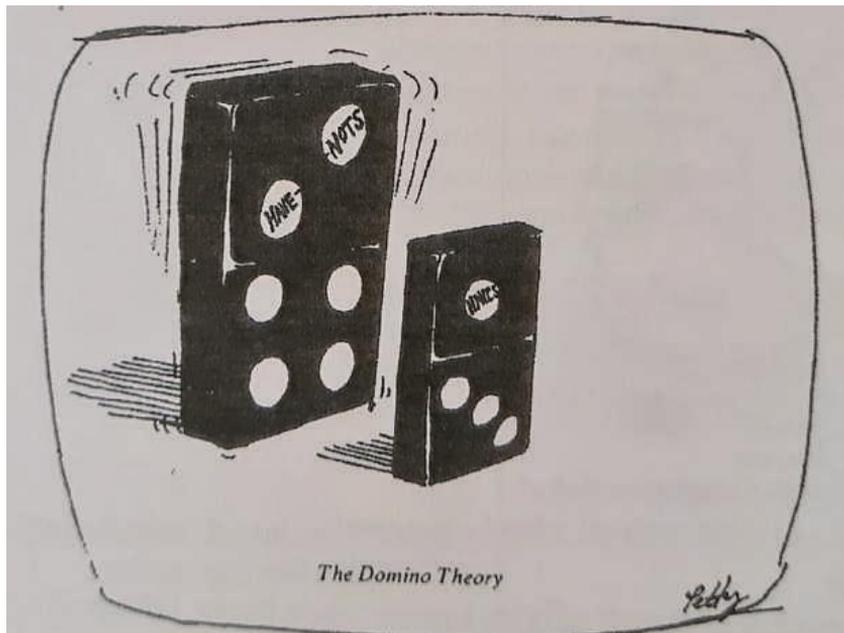
How does the review of events in Source 7.38 confirm Alan Renouf's reasons for involvement in Vietnam?

On 21 April 1965, Prime Minister Menzies reiterated the relevance of Eisenhower's Domino Theory. On 29 April, he announced that the first battalion of Australian troops would be deployed.

### Source 7.39

I subscribe to the Domino Theory ... because I believe it obvious ... that if the Vietnam War ends with some compromise that denies South Vietnam a real and protected independence, Laos and Cambodia, Thailand, Malaysia, Singapore and Indonesia will be vulnerable ... this Domino Theory ... has formidable reality to Australians who see the boundaries of aggressive communism coming closer and closer.

Robert Menzies, Telecast, 13 July 1965, Anzac Day Commemoration website.<sup>37</sup>



↑ **Source 7.40** *The Domino Theory*, Bruce Petty. In Peter Cook and Corinne Manning. 'Australia's Vietnam War in History and Memory', eds., *La Trobe University Studies in History*, 2nd edition, 2002, p. 4

## USING HISTORICAL SOURCES AS EVIDENCE 7.16

1. Who is represented by the two dominoes in Source 7.40?
2. What is the significance of the different sizes of the dominoes?
3. Who is Bruce Petty suggesting are the 'Haves' and the 'Have Nots'?
4. Why might communism appeal to the 'Have Nots'?

Prime Minister Menzies announced the first Australian troop deployment in parliament on 29 April 1965.

It is our judgment that the decision to commit a battalion in South Vietnam represents the most useful additional contribution we can make to the defence of the region at this time. The takeover of South Vietnam would be a direct military threat to Australia and all the countries of South and South East Asia. It must be seen as part of a thrust by Communist China between the Indian and Pacific Oceans.

Source 7.41

Robert Menzies, *Vietnam* (speech), 29 April 1965, PM Transcripts, Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet website.<sup>38</sup>

### The question of an invitation

According to SEATO, member states could ‘take no action on the territory of any State ... except at the invitation or with the consent of the government concerned.’ (Article IV(3) of the Treaty). Even though South Vietnam, Cambodia and Laos were not parties to the Treaty, they were afforded military protection under it. Post-war studies of government papers reveal that an invitation was not received from the South Vietnamese Government. The impression is conveyed that the deployment of troops was to confirm to the Americans that Australia was behind them in this conflict.

### FOCUS QUESTION 7.6

Examine Source 7.41.  
What reasons does Prime Minister Menzies give for committing a battalion of Australian troops to Vietnam?

... by claiming that a beleaguered South Vietnam had asked for Australian involvement, Menzies was able to imbue the deployment with moral legitimacy.

While he [Menzies] knew the United States would be receptive to him sending a battalion, he had to get permission from the South Vietnamese Government. However, the South Vietnamese Prime Minister Phan Huy Quat was reluctant. He felt that the arrival of more foreign troops would be a propaganda coup for North Vietnam ...

... A fortnight after the announcement a Morgan Gallup Poll found that 64 per cent of people believed that communism would overrun South-East Asia if left unchecked.

Source 7.42

National Museum of Australia, ‘Australian Troops committed to Vietnam’, 28 May 2021, National Museum of Australia website.<sup>39</sup>

### USING HISTORICAL SOURCES AS EVIDENCE 7.17

1. What information in Source 7.42 suggests that the majority of Australian people would not have been concerned about the lack of an invitation?
2. Why could the arrival of Australian troops in South Vietnam be viewed as a propaganda coup for North Vietnam?

## 'Peace with honour': The final stages of the war

In 1969, to extract themselves from this intractable war, the United States and its allies embarked on a policy of 'Vietnamisation'. This meant that, as the foreign forces withdrew, the South Vietnamese would continue the fight themselves. As we will see from the following events and perspectives, the Australian Government's 'habitual closeness of relations with the United States' ended abruptly in 1972.

On 2 December 1972, the Australian Labor Party won the federal election after 23 years in opposition. The new Prime Minister, Gough Whitlam, had become increasingly opposed to the war since his election as leader of the ALP in 1967. The new government immediately ended conscription, ordered the release of imprisoned draft resisters, dropped charges against others, and ordered home the last remaining troops in Vietnam.<sup>40</sup>

Sixteen days later, on 18 December, the United States resumed aerial bombing of North Vietnam in an attempt to force the North Vietnamese back to the stalled peace talks in Paris. B-52 bombers dropped an estimated 40 000 tonnes of bombs over an 11-day period in the most intensive bombing of the war. While



↑ **Source 7.43** A US B-52 bomber during a bombing run over North Vietnam

'Operation Linebacker II' was suspended over the Christmas period, the campaign came to be known as 'The Christmas Bombing'.

The operation provoked protests of 'indiscriminate carpet-bombing' from many nations, including Australia.<sup>41</sup> This criticism of the US action ran counter to the close and uncritical stance of the previous Liberal–Country Party Government. For the Americans, it signalled a deterioration in relations with Australia. According to historian James Curran:

### Source 7.44

The Australians did not mince words ... Having opposed the Vietnam War since the first Australian troops were committed to the conflict in 1965, some Labor spokesmen shed any pretence to diplomatic moderation, and went for the jugular. The White House was full of 'maniacs', said Clyde Cameron, Minister for Labour and Immigration, while the spokesman for Urban Affairs, Tom Uren, accused Nixon of committing 'mass murder' and 'acting with the mentality of thuggery'. Dr Jim Cairns, in the more

senior portfolio of Trade, called it ‘the most brutal, indiscriminate slaughter of women and children in living memory’.

James Curran, ‘On Whitlam and the U.S. Alliance’, 22 October 2014, Lowy Institute website.<sup>42</sup>

The formal letter [Whitlam] sent to Nixon criticising the bombings – his first piece of substantial correspondence with the White House as prime minister – so enraged Nixon that it plunged the relationship into a virtual six-month freeze.

Source 7.45

James Curran, Gough Whitlam’s incendiary letter to Richard Nixon on Vietnam, *The Australian*, 1 May 2015.

And what of the Paris Peace Talks? They resumed. On 23 January 1973, President Nixon announced that an agreement had been reached for ‘peace with honour’. The official ceasefire commenced on 27 January. However, a year later, war had resumed between the North and South. By 30 April 1975, the South Vietnamese forces had been overrun, the last American soldiers had left Saigon, and the Second Indochina War had ended. Ho Chi Minh’s long-held goal of the reunification of the two Vietnams into an independent communist state had become a reality.

Evaluating Australia’s contribution to the war in Vietnam, historian Ashley Ekins concludes that:

There was a conspicuous gap between the ‘hawkish’ political rhetoric of successive Liberal–Country Party governments and the actual level of Australian military commitment to the Vietnam War. Australia never undertook a commitment to the Vietnam War either comparable with that of its larger ally, the United States, or indeed ever approaching the level requested by the Americans. The rhetoric of Prime Minister Holt’s much-quoted slogan, ‘All the way with LBJ!’, was never matched by reality.

Source 7.46

### FOCUS QUESTION 7.7

What is Ashley Ekins’ view of Australia’s contribution to the Vietnam War?

Ashley Ekins, ‘Impressions: Australians in Vietnam, Overview of Australian Military involvement in the Vietnam War 1962-75’, 22 February 2021, Australian War Memorial website.<sup>43</sup>

## The cost of the war

The ‘cost’ of the war can be measured in lives lost and dollars spent.

In 1995 Vietnam released its official estimate of the number of people killed during ‘The American War’.

↓ **Source 7.47** Casualties in the ‘American War’, according to Vietnam<sup>44</sup>

Civilians	2 000 000 on both sides
Fighters	1 100 000 North Vietnamese and Viet Cong
South Vietnamese soldiers	200 000 (US military estimate)

↓ **Source 7.48** Casualties of the United States and its allies in the war<sup>45</sup>

Country	Killed
United States	58 500
South Korea	4 000
Australia	521
Thailand	350
New Zealand	37

The financial cost of participating in the war was also high.

↓ **Source 7.49** The financial cost of staging the war, for the United States and Australia.<sup>46</sup>

United States	US\$168 billion; including US\$111 billion in military operations and US\$28.5 billion in aid to South Vietnam Additionally, since 1970, the post-war benefits for veterans and families has cost US\$270 billion
Australia	AU\$218.4 million Costs for post-war benefits for veterans and families unavailable

The land and environment of Vietnam and surrounding countries were also casualties of the war, suffering extensive, long-term and often irreversible damage.

**Source 7.50**

Between 1965 and 1975, the United States and its allies dropped more than 7.5 million tons of bombs on Vietnam, Laos, and Cambodia—double the amount dropped on Europe and Asia during World War II. Pound for pound, it remains the largest aerial bombardment in human history... All told, the U.S. Air Force, Navy, and Marine Corps together conducted at least 2.8 million combat missions against ground targets, while the air forces of South Vietnam, Laos, Australia, and South Korea added an additional 360,000 missions to the tally.

Cooper Thomas, ‘Bombing Missions of the Vietnam War’, 2017, Esri Story Maps website.<sup>47</sup>

In his rigorous analysis of the war, an Australian Army intelligence officer, Captain Robert O’Neill made some observations, forecasts and conclusions, many of which would prove prescient (seeing future events correctly) about the outcome of the conflict in Vietnam.

In late 1966 Captain Robert O'Neill, intelligence officer with the 5th Battalion, Royal Australian Regiment (5RAR), prepared a paper at the request of his commanding officer. He examined the operational experiences of the battalion during the previous six months in Phuoc Tuy province and assessed the likely effectiveness of alternative approaches to operations in the future.

Source 7.51

'The final outcome of this war', he wrote, 'will be determined by the feelings of the Vietnamese people. No purely military victory, however overwhelming, can provide a permanent solution unless the victory is won by the side whom the people favour.' Time was also a crucial factor, he noted, and clearly was on the side of the communist forces, not the United States and its allies.

Ashley Ekins, 'Vietnam: A Winnable War?', in 'War, Strategy and History', 2016, Australian National University Press Library website.<sup>48</sup>

### USING HISTORICAL SOURCES AS EVIDENCE 7.18

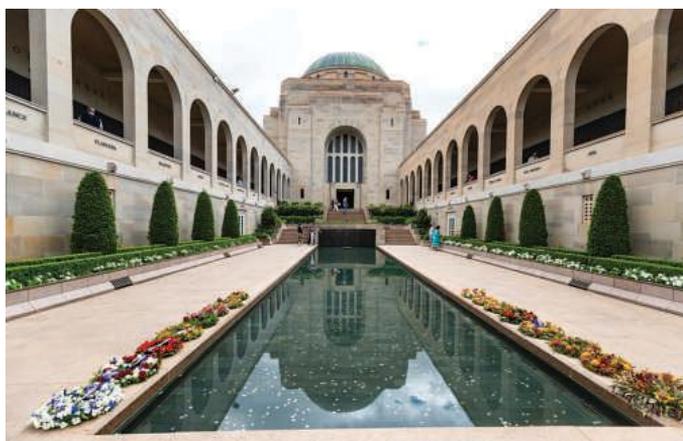
In many ways the nature of Australia's involvement in Malaya/Malaysia and Indonesia was quite different from that in Korea and Vietnam.

1. What were the different methods?
2. Why were the methods different?
3. What similarities were there between Australia's involvement in Malaya and Indonesia on the one hand and the war in Vietnam on the other?

## 7.7 The influence of war commemoration and memorials

### INQUIRY QUESTION

What influences do war commemoration and memorialisation have on Australian society?



← Source 7.52 The Australian War Memorial, Canberra

## Introduction

**commemoration** a service or celebration in memory of some person or event  
**memorial** something designed to preserve the memory of a person or event

With each ensuing conflict, Australia has continued its tradition of memorialisation and **commemoration**. While the country's main place of record and remembrance is the Australian War Memorial in Canberra, monuments and **memorials** are a common sight across Australia. These events in the nation's past have become the subject of government policy, including education programs that maintain wartime experience and sacrifice at the heart of Australia's history and collective memory. Along with remembrance there is a celebration of the ANZAC spirit which has come to shape a sense of national

identity for many Australians; a sentiment not shared by others who reject this characterisation of what it means to be Australian.

## Commemoration

**cenotaph** a monument erected in memory of a deceased person whose body is buried elsewhere

'War commemoration holds a significant place in Australia's history and national identity. From Gallipoli's central role in the creation of the Anzac legend, to the **cenotaphs**, avenues of honour and honour boards that exist in towns and halls across Australia, war and sacrifice hold a central place in our national discourse.'<sup>49</sup> The Department of Veterans' Affairs website states that days of commemoration in Australia are an opportunity to 'come

together to commemorate those who have served our nation and its allies in wars, conflicts and peace operations'.

Every year, Australians commemorate those who have served in the Australian Defence Forces. Source 7.53 is a list of our official commemoration days.

↓ Source 7.53

Date	Event
25 April	Anzac Day
8 May	Victory in Europe (VE) Day
27 July	Victory in the Pacific (VP) Day
18 August	Vietnam Veterans' Day
31 August	Malaya and Borneo Veterans' Day
3 September	Merchant Navy Day
1st Wednesday in September	Battle for Australia Day
14 September	Australian Peacekeepers' and Peacemakers' Day
11 November	Remembrance Day

DVA (Department of Veterans' Affairs) (2021), *Days of commemoration in Australia*, DVA Anzac Portal, accessed 10 May 2021.<sup>50</sup>

The most well-known commemoration day is Anzac Day. Anzac Day attendances have fluctuated since the 1950s but have been rising since the 75th anniversary of Anzac Day in 1990, when the Dawn Service took place at Anzac Cove. Since then, there has been a renewed sense of purpose to commemorate those who served, culminating in growing crowds at Dawn Services' and Anzac Day Parades.

In parallel with this re-emergence of community sentiment, the Federal Government continues to commit hundreds of millions of dollars to build memorials both at home and abroad. Additionally the Department of Veterans Affairs and the Australian War Memorial have undertaken the development of Australian military history educational resources, which are distributed to schools across Australia.

## Perspectives

In 2010, the Australian National University (ANU) and the Australian War Memorial (AWM) hosted an international conference on Gallipoli. Professor Joan Beaumont, of the ANU Strategic and Defence Studies Centre, discussed the influence of war commemoration and the relevance of the Anzac legend to the changing demographics of Australia.

There is some evidence that certain immigrant groups, particularly those that come from countries which are war zones, have difficulty engaging with the Anzac legend. The Anzac legend has sometimes been seen as the last hurrah of the white Australian male. If you have a national narrative that is essentially centred on white men, how then does the rest of the population relate to it?

Source 7.54

Joan Beaumont, 'Anzac legend needs to change', *Historian*, 17 March 2015, Australian National University Newsroom website.<sup>51</sup>

In 2012, Tim Southphommassane, an academic and social commentator who became the Race Discrimination Commissioner from 2013 to 2018, commented:

As a first-generation Australian who was born overseas, bearing Chinese and Lao heritage, I once struggled to see how Anzac Day could have meaning for me. During my teenage years I found myself at a loss when others at school spoke about the sacrifice made by 'our forebears' in defending 'an Australian way of life'. This wasn't something to which I could relate. I didn't have a grandfather or great-grandfather who served at Gallipoli or on the Western Front. I knew enough to know that the Australia that Diggers fought to defend was one that would have excluded my forebears under the White Australia policy. In time, I came to accept the Anzac legend as integral to an Australian story, as a touchstone of mateship. Truth is, when you adopt a national identity you inherit a tradition, with all the benefits and responsibilities that come with it. And one of those responsibilities is to remember.

Source 7.55

Tim Southphommassane, 'Where does Anzac Day fit in a culturally diverse Australia?', *Sydney Morning Herald*, 23 April 2012.<sup>52</sup>

## USING HISTORICAL SOURCES AS EVIDENCE 7.19

What do Sources 7.53 and 7.54 reveal about the differing ways Australians respond to Anzac Day?

## Memorials

Historian Ken Inglis made a study of war memorials in Australia, remarking:

### Source 7.56

**Places of Pride** the National Register of War Memorials is an Australian War Memorial initiative to record the location and photos of every war memorial across the country

During and after the First World War, memorials started appearing to honour the over 60 000 Australian war dead. For families who lost sons overseas, these memorials became the focus of their grieving and commemoration. It is estimated that there are over 1500 such memorials: ‘an essential part of every little country community, dotted right across Australia.’

Ken Inglis, ‘Set in stone: A nation of small town memorials’, *ABC News* website.<sup>53</sup>

## RESEARCH TASK 7.2

Use the **Places of Pride** National Register of War Memorials website to find war memorials in your town or suburb. List which war is commemorated and analyse the words on the memorial(s).

Recently, there has been much debate on the influence of war commemoration on the Australian identity and the commercialisation of memorialisation. In her 2018 book, *Consuming Anzac: The History of Australia’s Most Powerful Brand*, historian Jo Hawkins explores ‘the booming Anzac industry’ and its commercial and political promotion of the Anzac ‘brand’ that has led to war memory being romanticised and sanitised for popular audiences. She cites historian Graeme Davison, who observed:

### Source 7.57

Feeling connected to the past, after all, is not at all the same as being connected with history ... [People can keep] the habit of commemoration, while losing touch with the historic event that brought it into being.

Davison, quoted in Hawkins, *Consuming Anzac – The History of Australia’s Most Powerful Brand*, 2003 p.5

In 2018, the Australian Government committed over \$498 million to the expansion of the Australian War Memorial. The expansion will include space dedicated to service people who have served in recent conflicts as well as an interactive display ‘that links the Memorial to thousands of individual, regional and state memorials across the country’. As works on the expansion began in 2021, debate arose again about the allocation of funds to this project. Of the 601 community submissions on the redevelopment proposal, only three submissions supported the proposal in its current form. Many Australians were dismayed at the proposed demolition of the architecturally significant Anzac Hall, including the Australian Institute of Architects which instigated a #HandsOffAnzacHall campaign.<sup>54</sup>

The director of the Australian War Memorial, Dr. Brendan Nelson, was unapologetic when asked about the \$498 million price tag at a time when many of Australia’s cultural institutions were struggling with financial cuts.

He simply stated:

There is one national institution in this country that reveals more than anything else our character as a people, our soul.

Source 7.58

Jordan Hayne and Jon Healy, “Australian War Memorial’s \$500m expansion to honour ‘Invictus generation’”, 1 Nov 2018, *ABC News* website.<sup>55</sup>

However, not everyone agreed. When speaking at a symposium on veteran suicide, Dr Caldicott (an emergency doctor from Calvary Hospital) called for the money to be used to better support returned personnel.

The essence of a country does not come from its buildings and the monuments to the suffering of its people ... the essence of the country, the essence of an army, is those people.

Source 7.59

Alex Crowe, ‘Australian War Memorial expansion better invested in psychedelic-assisted therapy research’, 14 March 2021, *The Canberra Times* website.<sup>56</sup>

A mural painted by Melbourne street artist Cam Scale in Devenish, North-East Victoria, depicts the changing role of women in the military. The first stage of the artwork was unveiled on Anzac Day 2018 to coincide with the centenary of our involvement in WWI. The money for the murals was raised by the local population to commemorate the 50 young men and women from the Devenish community, who enlisted in the military services during WWI.



↑ Source 7.60 Photographed by Annette Green <https://www.australiansiloarttrail.com/devenish>

## Conclusion

The influence of war commemoration and memorialisation on the Australian public is currently being debated by historians, academics and politicians. However, as seen in the above sources, war commemoration and memorialisation continue to influence our understanding of our history and our identity.

## 7.8 Chapter summary

Here are some dot-points for you to consider and add to:

### Continuity

- Australia continued to support British military engagement.
- In Korea, Malaya and Indonesia, Australian troops were volunteers.
- Commemoration and memorialisation of Australia's war experience.

### Change

- Australia's strategic focus shifted further away from reliance on Britain.
- Alliances shifted to reflect security concerns in Southeast Asia – SEATO and ANZUS.

## 7.9 End-of-chapter activities

### Consolidating your understanding

Complete the following questions to help revise the key events, ideas, perspectives and experiences relating to Australia's commitment to Cold War conflicts.

### Evaluating historical significance

1. What security concerns led to the Australian Government subscribing to the Domino Theory?
2. Using Source 7.9, explain the purpose of Prime Minister Menzies' Forward Defence strategy.
3. Using Source 7.18, explain how Menzies justified Australia's commitment to the Korean War.
4. When the ANZUS Treaty was signed in 1949, only five years after the end of World War II, Australians still had fears of a new attack by Japan. What evidence do the first two paragraphs of Source 7.2 provide about the ways in which the United States tried to address these fears?

### Constructing an argument: essay writing

1. To what extent has the influence of war commemoration and memorialisation shaped our understanding of the Australian identity. Use evidence to support your response.
2. 'While Australia's military involvement in Malaya and Indonesia had a few similarities with that in Korea and Vietnam, the differences in the ways we were involved were more important.' Using the text of Section 7.5 and Sources 7.27 to 7.33, provide evidence that would support this quotation.

### Extension reading

#### The Malayan Emergency

Virginia Matheson Hooker, *A short history of Malaysia – linking East and West*, Allan and Unwin, Sydney, 2003.

This book gives detailed insight into issues we cover at the end of this chapter and in most of Chapter 8.

P. Dennis and J. Grey, *Emergency and Confrontation; Australia Military Operations in Malaya and Borneo, 1950-1966*, Allen & Unwin, 1996.

This book is part of the Australia War Memorial's Official History, It gives a very thorough account of the Malayan Emergency and Indonesian Confrontation.

### **The Korean War**

Commemoration Branch, *Korea – A Cold War Conflict 1950–1953*, DVA, Canberra 2016.

This book is useful for primary sources and activities.

Edwards Peter, *Australia and the Vietnam War: The Essential History*, Australian War Memorial, NewSouth Publishing, 2014.

The early chapters also cover other regional conflicts.

The Australian War Memorial has online articles about the Korean War.

### **The Vietnam War**

Michael Crawford, *The Vietnam Years: from the jungle to the Australian suburbs*, Hachette, Sydney, 2007.

Peter Edwards, *Australia and the Vietnam War: The Essential History*, Australian War Memorial, NewSouth Publishing, 2014.

Ashley Ekins, Ian McNeill, *Fighting to the Finish – The Australian Army and the Vietnam War 1968–1975*, Australian War Memorial, 2012.

Murphy John, *Harvest of Fear: a history of Australia's Vietnam War*, Melbourne, Allen & Unwin, 1993.

The Australian War Memorial has many online articles about the Vietnam War.

### **Commemoration and memorials**

Hawkins, Jo. *Consuming Anzac – The History of Australia's most powerful brand*, UWA Publishing, 2018.

Ken Inglis, *Sacred Places War Memorials in the Australian Landscape*. Melbourne University Press, 2008.

Marilyn Lake, Henry Reynolds, Joy Damousi, Mark McKenna, *What's Wrong with Anzac– The Militarisation of Australian History*, University of NSW, Sydney, 2010.

The Australian War Memorial has many online articles relating to commemoration and memorials.

# CHAPTER 8

## Diverse and competing perspectives



Source 8.0 Troops disembarking from a QANTAS aircraft, Saigon, 28 April 1966

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## Chapter timeline

Conscription	Year	Deployment
	<b>1962</b>	<b>24 May:</b> 30 Australian military advisers are sent to Vietnam to train the South Vietnamese Army
	<b>1963</b>	By end of 1963, the United States has 15 000 advisers in South Vietnam and has donated US\$500 000 000, to South Vietnam
<b>10 November:</b> Prime Minister Menzies announces the reintroduction of the National Service Scheme through the National Service Act	<b>1964</b>	<b>8 June:</b> Australia increases its military advisers to 83 with expanded roles <b>18 December:</b> Australia sends additional 200 advisers to Vietnam and offers to send ground troops
Act amended to provide that conscripts could be obliged to serve overseas	<b>1965</b>	<b>8 March:</b> The United States sends its first combat troops to Vietnam (3500 Marines) <b>29 April:</b> Prime Minister Menzies announces the First Battalion (800 infantry troops) will be sent to Vietnam <b>8 June:</b> Bulk of First Battalion arrives in Vietnam <b>17 August:</b> Australian Government announces increase in Australian forces
<b>30 June:</b> First National Service intake starts training	<b>1966</b>	<b>6 March:</b> Prime Minister Holt announces an increase to 4350-man task force, including National Servicemen
<b>6 March:</b> Prime Minister Holt announces that National Servicemen would be sent to Vietnam to fight in units of the Australian Regular Army		
<b>May:</b> First National Servicemen are sent to Vietnam as part of 1st Australian Task Force		
<b>24 May:</b> Private Errol Noak becomes the first National Serviceman to be killed in Vietnam	<b>1967</b>	<b>26 May:</b> New Zealand commits a battalion to Vietnam <b>18 October:</b> Prime Minister Holt announces an increase of 1700 to Australia's commitment
	<b>1968</b>	<b>12 February:</b> Prime Minister Gorton indicates that Australia will not increase its commitment to Vietnam

Conscription	Year	Deployment
	1969	The US President, Richard Nixon, announces the 'Vietnamization' of the war and begins to bring troops home
	1970	<b>22 April:</b> Prime Minister Gorton announces the beginning of troop withdrawal from Vietnam
<b>18 August:</b> Period of National Service reduced to 18 months	1971	<b>18 August:</b> Prime Minister McMahon announces that the bulk of Australian forces are to be withdrawn, leaving only a modified advisory team
<b>5 December:</b> The newly elected Labor Government under Prime Minister Whitlam ends conscription. Draft resisters are released from prison and pending prosecutions are dropped.	1972	<b>8 December:</b> Australia's military commitment in Vietnam ends

Adapted from Vietnam Veterans Association Calendar of Military and Political Events at: <https://cambridge.edu.au/redirect/9685>

## 8.1 Introduction: The Vietnam War: Conscription and deployment

### INQUIRY QUESTION

How did attitudes to conscription and deployment change over the course of the Vietnam War?

### Introduction

Not since the conscription referenda of World War I had Australia experienced such a level of dissent and division as occurred during the Vietnam War in the 1960s and 1970s. The Liberal–Country Party (LCP) Government took two steps that proved controversial. First, in November 1964, the Federal Government reintroduced the National Service Scheme. Second, five months later, the government announced the deployment of the first battalion of ground troops to Vietnam. These decisions instigated debates that occupied many Australians throughout the war. In this chapter, we will analyse the ways in which these debates played out – politically, socially and in the media.

## The National Service Scheme, 1964

In a campaign speech for the 1966 Federal Election, Prime Minister Harold Holt explained to the electorate why the reintroduction of National Service had been necessary.

One of the basic issues of this election is national military training carrying the duty to serve abroad as well as at home. If we are to meet our obligations, we must have trained men immediately available to do the job. Our Army is to be built from 22 750 to 40 000 as quickly as practicable. Voluntary enlistment did not provide suitable men to the extent needed. We and our advisers concluded there was no realistic alternative to National Service.

Source 8.1

Harold Holt, (Election speech), 8 November 1966,  
Museum of Australian Democracy website.<sup>1</sup>

Under the *National Service Act, 1964* (Cth), National Servicemen (popularly called Nashos) were required to serve two years in the Regular Army Supplement and three years as part-time reservists. Between 1965 and 1972, all 20-year-old males, except those of Aboriginal descent, born between 1945 and 1952 had to register for National Service. Failure to register was an offence. However, if young men chose to commit to six years in the Citizen Military Force prior to registering, they would be exempt.

The scheme was administered by the Federal Department of Labour and National Service. To determine selection, the department returned to the 'birthday' ballot system that had been implemented in 1957. Wooden marbles with dates inscribed on them were randomly drawn from a barrel. This system was dubbed 'the lottery of death' by Federal Opposition Leader Arthur Calwell. However, despite such opposition, most Australians supported the reintroduction of the scheme. The main point of departure from the previous scheme was the amendment made to the National Service Act in May 1965, which obliged Nashos to be deployed overseas within units of the Regular Army.

The National Service Scheme operated from November 1964 to December 1972.



↑ **Source 8.2** A photograph of the ballot balls (marbles) that were used by the Australian Government as part of its National Service Scheme between 1965 and 1972. The ballot was used to select men to be conscripted into the Australian army.

## The question of volunteering for overseas service

For historian Mark Dapin, ‘the most provocative and divisive question about National Service’ during the Vietnam era ‘remains whether any conscript was compelled to go to war’.<sup>2</sup> Historian Paul Ham also argues in his book *Vietnam - The Australian War* that ‘the great majority went to Vietnam enthusiastically.’ Dapin cites numerous Nashos, who stated that they did not volunteer, and others who (despite applying for exemption on compassionate grounds such as being newly married or politically opposed to the war) found themselves serving in Vietnam.<sup>3</sup> While there were a number of grounds for exemption and deferment, the government’s expectation was that National Servicemen would supplement the Regular Army on ‘special overseas service’, which included combat duties in Vietnam. This is borne out in Prime Minister Harold Holt’s own words.

### Source 8.3

The call-up has been devised so as to cause the smallest possible disturbance to studies, employment and family commitments, and so as to ensure thorough and effective training before a national serviceman is required to serve overseas. The policy permits young men to make a choice between service with the regular forces and service with the citizen forces.

Harold Holt, (Election speech), 8 November 1966, Museum of Australian Democracy website.<sup>4</sup>

### Source 8.4

National Service Statistics:

- 804 286 registered
- 237 048 elected to serve with the citizen forces
- 63 735 served in the Army
- 3543 exemptions were granted
- 553 theological students were exempted
- 1242 conscientious objectors determined by court
- 14 men were imprisoned for failure to obey a call-up notice
- 99 010 rejected on medical, psychological, education grounds.

Sue Langford, Appendix from *The National Service Scheme 1964-72*, in Peter Edwards, *A nation at war : Australian politics, society and diplomacy during the Vietnam War 1965-1975: the official history of Australia's involvement in Southeast Asian conflicts 1948-1975*, from the Australian War Memorial website.<sup>5</sup>

## The immediate response

During the 1960s, newspapers were an integral part of the news cycle along with television and radio. Newspapers had a much larger readership than they do today, and, as such, they played a significant role in influencing and/or reflecting public opinion. In Sources 8.5 and 8.6, *The Age* newspaper reports on Opposition Leader Arthur Calwell’s attempt to censure the government over its National Service plans just prior to the 1964 Senate election.

CALL UP JUST AN ELECTION STRATAGEM' – MR CALWELL  
ATTACKS DEFENCE PROGRAMME

Source 8.5

In response to Menzies announcement of its conscription plans ... Calwell moves a censure on the government:

'That this house [House of Representatives] opposes the government's proposals to conscript Australian youth for service overseas, regrets its failure to stimulate recruitment for the Regular Army and condemns its delay in securing naval and air force to safeguard Australia and its territories ...'

Referring to the birthday ballot system of selection for National Service, Mr. Calwell said 'These boys with not only their careers but possibly their lives at stake are to be selected by some form of lottery, or Russian Roulette. The Labor Party opposes conscription for the youth of this country for service overseas in peacetime. But when it is proposed ... to conscript one in thirty of boys eligible each year, rank injustice is piled on folly. One would go but twenty-nine would stay. Such a system would open the door for the exercise of every kind of privilege and pressure. In the end it would mean that those selected would be young fellows whose families lacked influence and friends.'

*The Age*, 13 November 1964, from the Newspapers.com website.<sup>6</sup>

In the same edition, *The Age* editorial had this to say about Labor's policy.

... the Labor Party has become a prisoner of its own policy, a policy enshrined by tradition, but no longer relevant to present-day realities. The principle of no peacetime conscription for overseas military service had some validity when Australia was little more than a remote outpost of the British Empire, sheltered by the global might of the Royal Navy ... Britannia no longer rules the waves and our nearest neighbors are no longer compliant colonies of Europe. ... [Calwell] must know that whatever the deficiencies in our naval and air defences, there is no substitute, in the brushfire jungle wars in which our forces are likely to be involved, for the trained, well-equipped and easily mobilised soldiers.

Source 8.6

*The Age* (editorial), 13 November 1964, from the Newspapers.com website.<sup>7</sup>

### USING HISTORICAL SOURCES AS EVIDENCE 8.1

1. Examine Source 8.5. What does Arthur Calwell mean when he likens the ballot to 'Russian Roulette'?
2. What in Calwell's speech suggests Labor's support for the working class?
3. Examine Source 8.6. How does *The Age* editorial paint Calwell's views as out of date?
4. What does 'Britannia no longer rules the waves' mean?

## Attitudes to conscription

Between 1911 and 1964, there were only 16 years in which there had not been some form of a national military training scheme in Australia, and so it was not a new idea for Australians.<sup>8</sup> The following types of evidence – Gallup polls, letters to the Prime Minister, newspaper editorials, the reception to the visit by the US President and the 1966 federal election – may indicate what Australians thought about its reintroduction in 1964.

→ **Source 8.7** Victorian Liberal MP, Mr E.D. Mackinnon, holds aloft the first marble he drew in the ballot to decide the 20-year-old youths who will be conscripted into the Army. The number on the marble was not disclosed and the rest of the ballot was conducted in secret. *Sydney Morning Herald*, 11 March 1965.



## Gallup polls on conscription, 1961–70

↓ **Source 8.8**

Poll date	Favour/for/continue conscription, %	Oppose/against/end conscription, %	Undecided, %
June 1961	73	21	6
June 1962	67	27	6
August 1963	69	27	4
January 1964	69	24	7
November 1964	71	25	4
September 1965	69	23	8
April 1966	63	31	6
July 1966	68	26	6
November 1966	63	33	4
November 1967	70	25	5
December 1968	65	29	6
August 1969	63	32	5
October 1969	58	32	10
April 1970	55	39	6
October 1970	58	34	8

Peter Cook and Corinne Manning (eds), *Australia's Vietnam War in History and Memory*, La Trobe University, Melbourne, 2002, p.54.

## Gallup polls on sending conscripts to Vietnam, 1965–67

↓ Source 8.9

Poll date	Send to Vietnam, %	Keep in Australia, %	Undecided, %
December 1965	37	52	11
February 1966	32	57	11
April 1966	38	49	13
July 1966	38	52	11
December 1966	37	52	9
August 1967	42	49	9

Peter Cook and Corinne Manning (eds), *Australia's Vietnam War in History and Memory*, La Trobe University, Melbourne, 2002, p.54.

## Letters to the Prime Minister in support of National Service

As we have already seen, Australian military personnel were already deployed elsewhere in Southeast Asia prior to, and during, engagement in Vietnam. Correspondents who supported National Service wrote to Prime Minister Menzies in the early 1960s. They were chiefly concerned about the threat of communism and/or the moral decline of Australian youth.

Sources 8.10–8.14 are extracts from Christina Twomey's article, 'The National Service Scheme: Citizenship and the Tradition of Compulsory Military Service in 1960s in Australia'.<sup>9</sup> The correspondence she cites is contained in the National Archives of Australia.

In 1962, the Queensland Women's Electoral League urged the reintroduction of compulsory military training 'in view of the present unsettled situation in the near East'.

Source 8.10

In 1962, the President of the Anti-Bolshevik Bloc of Nations told a public meeting in Sydney that '... [migrants] have unfortunately more experience of armies and wars, of communist terrors, of Soviet occupations, deportations, concentration camps etc. than maybe any other born in Australia'. National Service training was therefore 'of an urgent and utmost importance for our country in view of the present grave political situation in the world, and in south east Asia.'

Source 8.11

In 1963, Richard Wegner of South Australia wrote to the Prime Minister. He thought that the National Service would 'satisfy the adventure-lust that is at present being so uselessly dissipated by many young men such as Sydney's "rockers and surfies"'.

Source 8.12

**Source 8.13**

In 1963, Warrant Officer J. Rees (N.S.W) warned that an ‘awareness of good citizenship is not easily gained.’ He was concerned that the Australian youth had ‘no real purpose in life’. He described them as ‘wandering aimlessly in a weird jungle of moaning, transistorized noise with minds seared and warped by the radio, TV, movie and reading rubbish that largely inundates this country and their lives from America.’ [...] ‘Let this contorted image be replaced by the will and enthusiasm to defend and prosper this country by the early introduction of rigid National Service training, wholly and solely under Army control.’

**Source 8.14**

In 1964, John Ryan of Newcastle was worried about 100 million Indonesians ‘sitting on our doorstep’ when the Australian population was 11 million ... including a ‘lot of no hopers’ who would sooner go on social service than work [...] I figure the ‘conscription should be brought in’.

Christina Twomey, *The National Service Scheme: Citizenship and the Tradition of Compulsory Military Service in 1960 Australia*, Australian Journal of Politics and History, Vol.58, Issue 1, March 2012, pp.67-81.

**USING HISTORICAL SOURCES AS EVIDENCE 8.2**

What reasons do each of these correspondents give for their support for the reintroduction of a National Service Scheme? Complete the following table.

Name	Reason	Supporting quote



Plate 16: 'Ballot day for National Service: "Lo! The smell of battle in the air and sounds of distant musketry ... 'tis the call to arms!...' Cartoon by Paul Rigby, 1965. (Courtesy of the *West Australian*.)

↑ **Source 8.15** Cartoon by Paul Rigby, 1965, courtesy *The West Australian*, *Australia's Vietnam War in History and Memory*, Peter Cook and Corinne Manning (eds), La Trobe University Studies in History, p. 56

## FOCUS QUESTION 8.1

Examine Source 8.15. How does Paul Rigby's cartoon reinforce the views expressed in the Sources 8.10–8.14?

**PERSONAL PARTICULARS** Page 1

Surname O'HARA Other Names PATRICK HARRINGTON (in full)  
Army Number 3791411 Corps TRAF Identity Card Number 37911  
Date of Birth 1.12.46 Place of Birth Kilmore Vic (New Zealand)  
Religion RC If Will lodged and where YES GARD  
Complexion FAIR Marks or Scars \_\_\_\_\_  
Hair BROWN  
Eyes BROWN  
Height 5 9 1/2  
Weight 98 (lbs)  
Physical Disabilities and Special Characteristics (eg, impediment of speech, allergies) \_\_\_\_\_  
Date of Photograph 19/Nov/66 Marital Status S Blood Group B. Pos  
Signature P. A. O'Hara

← **Source 8.16** This is the 'Personal Particulars' form of Patrick Harrington O'Hara. Patrick was conscripted for national service in 1966 and served in Vietnam.

### The historians' perspective

Christine Twomey suggests that despite the focus on opposition to the National Service Scheme and its unpopularity, 'most Australians supported the reintroduction of the scheme' and 'many young men complied with its provisions'.<sup>10</sup> This view is supported by Mark Dapin for whom 'the great majority of young Australians in the mid-1960s considered obedience to the law to be an obligation rather than an option, and would no more have resisted military service than burgled a neighbour's home'.<sup>11</sup> It was the overseas deployment of National Servicemen that broke with accepted traditions of prior compulsory military service schemes. Twomey argues that 'compulsory military service was seen as essential in the context of the Cold War, and as a way of ensuring that young men ... were inducted into models of masculinity, citizenship and duty considered essential for a cohesive society'.<sup>12</sup>

### Perspectives

#### A national serviceman

I thought Australia should be involved. At that time, the anti-Vietnam movement really hadn't got a go on ... because the population at that time was in favour. I mean my attitudes changed dramatically very quickly, but at that point then, yeah, I was in favour of it ... to be honest though, it was the personal things that were to the fore. I saw it as an escape from a job I didn't particularly like. I saw it as a way to see a bit more of Australia or maybe further afield ... I sort of went into National Service with the aim, well, I don't like teaching and I don't really want to go back to it, so let's take the opportunity to try and learn a new skill I could use back in civilian life.

Geoffrey Morgan, in Michael Crawford, *The Vietnam Years: from the jungle to the Australian suburbs*, Hachette, Sydney, 2007, p.108.

### FOCUS QUESTION 8.2

How is Christine Twomey's view supported by the letters to the Prime Minister?

#### Source 8.17

Source 8.18

RESEARCH  
TASK 8.1

Visit the Living Peace Museum website to read more about Australian draft resistance to the Vietnam War, 1966-9. Also, listen to 'The Ballad of Bill White' by Glen Tomasetti on YouTube. Is this a useful primary source?

After my number was selected, I wanted to register as a conscientious objector. When I went to Footscray post office to get the forms, the woman at the counter said she did not know anything about them. She went out the back to ask; then all these people came out and stared at me. The guy running the post office came to the counter; he said I should go and fight for my country. He said he didn't have the forms, and to go somewhere else because he didn't want to be the one to give them to me. I was really humiliated ...

Michael Leunig, in Michael Crawford, *The Vietnam Years: from the jungle to the Australian suburbs*, Hachette, Sydney, 2007, p.109.

The US President's visit October 1966

Huge crowds welcomed US President Lyndon B. Johnson on his brief tour of Australia. He visited Canberra, Melbourne, Sydney, Brisbane and Townsville. An estimated one million people turned out in Sydney to greet him, and in Melbourne more than 750 000 lined the streets. Some protesters tried to interrupt proceedings and some managed to throw paint on the President's car (two brothers were later charged over this incident). However, the overwhelming majority of people appeared to be right behind Prime Minister Harold Holt's famous line of going 'all the way with LBJ'. Source excerpts are from the front page of *The Age* under the headline: 'Melbourne goes wild for LBJ'.

Source 8.19

'The biggest crowd I have seen' ... this was President Lyndon Johnson's reaction to his tumultuous, whirlwind visit to Melbourne. Police estimated that more than 750 000 spectators lined the route of the Presidential motorcade.

Police thwarted plans for a mass demonstration by university students who were waiting in Grattan Street in Melbourne to hold up the President's motorcade. When advance police squads saw the large number waiting they radioed the lead cars to switch to 'emergency route 16' – Wreckyn Street to Queensberry Street to Swanston Street. In the city the motorcade turned into a triumphal procession. In Swanston Street it was enveloped in showers of streamers, ticker-tape, confetti and torn-up newspapers.

Fist fights broke out, and police, soldiers and American security men fought desperately, but vainly to keep the frenzied crowd clear of the President. A number of people fainted but the crush was so great they could not collapse underfoot. It was a thoroughly frightening – if affectionate – demonstration, and even President Johnson began to look concerned.

*The Age*, 22 October, from the Newspapers.com website.<sup>13</sup>



← **Source 8.20** Lyndon Johnson among adoring crowds in Swanston Street, 22 October 1966. Credit: Ken Wheeler.

## The 1966 election

For the first time in Australian history, the election on 26 November 1966 was dominated by foreign policy rather than by domestic issues. The Australian Labor Party (ALP) went into the election on a strongly anti-conscription, anti-war platform, while the Liberal–Country Party government maintained both its commitment to conscription, and its Forward Defence policy against ‘aggressive communism’. The posters in Source 8.21 reflect the key issues in the election campaign.



Both Labor and Liberal election advertisements highlighted the importance of Vietnam as an election issue, although only the ALP linked conscription and Vietnam. (Australian Labor Party and Liberal Party of Australia)

↑ **Sources 8.21** (Left) A pro-war Liberal Party poster and (right) an anti-war poster from the Labor Party regarding conscription

## USING HISTORICAL SOURCES AS EVIDENCE 8.3

1. Examine the posters in Source 8.21. Identify the key symbols in the election posters.
2. Explain what ideas and values the posters represent.

The election resulted in a landslide win for the LCP under Harold Holt's leadership, gaining an additional 10 seats in the House of Representatives. The ALP was shattered by the loss and the party leader, Arthur Calwell, was replaced by Gough Whitlam. In 1969, the ALP campaigned on a 'bring the troops home' platform. However, the LCP won again – albeit with a reduced majority.

### The voting age

Responding to claims that it was unfair to expect young men to serve in conflicts overseas when they were too young to vote in elections at home, in 1966 the Federal Government amended the Electoral Act to give members of the Defence Force who were under the voting age of 21 and who had been serving on 'special duty' in Vietnam, the Borneo States of Malaysia, the Malay Peninsula and in Singapore, the option of voting in the 1966 and the 1969 elections.

In 1973, the Electoral Act was again amended, and the voting age was lowered from 21 to 18.<sup>14</sup>

### Attitudes to deployment

*Gallup polls on the question 'Fight on in Vietnam – or bring forces back now?', 1965–70*

↓Source 8.23

Date	Continue to fight, %	Bring back, %	Undecided, %
September 1965	56	28	16
September 1966	61	27	12
May 1967	62	24	14
October 1968	54	38	8
December 1968	49	37	14
April 1969	48	40	12
August 1969	40	55	6
October 1969	39	51	10
3 October 1970	43	45	12
31 October 1970	42	45	12

Quoted in Peter Cook and Corinne Manning (eds), *Australia and Vietnam 1965–1972*, La Trobe University, Melbourne, 2002, p72.

↓ Source 8.22 'Newspaper, *The Sun*, 'Troops to Vietnam', Australian Living Peace Museum



## The politics of deployment

The Federal Government's decision to deploy an infantry battalion to Vietnam in April 1965 was the catalyst for intense political debate in the House of Representatives. Source 8.24 is from Prime Minister Menzies' Ministerial Statement on the deployment of troops to Vietnam.

The task of holding the situation in South Vietnam and restraining the North Vietnamese is formidable. But we are conscious of the magnitude of the effort being made by the Government and people of South Vietnam in their own defence. In recent months the United States has taken historic decisions to extend further military assistance to South Vietnam. South Korea has also committed substantial forces.

Speech by the Rt. Hon. Sir Robert Menzies, Vietnam Ministerial Statement, 29 April 1965, PM Transcripts from the Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet website.<sup>15</sup>

In his Ministerial Statement, Prime Minister Menzies cited President Johnson's letter welcoming Australia's commitment.

Dear Mr. Prime Minister,

I am delighted at the decision of your Government to provide an infantry battalion for service in South Vietnam at the request of the Government of South Vietnam. This action simply underscores the full cooperation and understanding that has existed between our two Governments, and between both and the Government of South Vietnam, in assisting South Vietnam to maintain its independence. Like you, we have no desire to maintain military forces in Vietnam any longer than necessary to ensure the security of South Vietnam. But we share your belief that we must both respond to the needs brought about by the aggression being carried on from North Vietnam.

Sincerely yours, Lyndon B. Johnson

Speech by the Rt. Hon. Sir Robert Menzies, *Vietnam Ministerial Statement*, 29 April 1965, PM Transcripts from the Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet website.<sup>16</sup>

Opposition Leader Arthur Calwell responded to Prime Minister Menzies' announcement in this way.

We do not think it is a wise decision ... We do not think it is a right decision ... We do not believe it will promote the welfare of the people of Vietnam. On the contrary, we believe it will prolong and deepen the suffering of that unhappy people so Australia's very name may become a term of reproach among them. We do not believe that it represents a wise or even intelligent response to the challenge of Chinese power ... We of the Labor Party do not believe that this decision serves or is consistent with, the immediate strategic interests of Australia. On the contrary we believe

*Continued...*

### Source 8.24

↓ Source 8.25 US President Lyndon B. Johnson



### Source 8.26

#### FOCUS QUESTION 8.3

Examine Sources 8.24 and 8.26. How does Prime Minister Menzies justify the government's decision to deploy troops to Vietnam?

### Source 8.27

**FOCUS  
QUESTION 8.4**

Examine Source 8.27.  
Why does Arthur Calwell  
view the government's  
attitude towards China as  
contradictory?

... *Continued*

that, by sending one quarter of our pitifully small effective military strength to distant Vietnam, the Government dangerously denudes Australia and its immediate strategic environs of effective power ... The Government justifies its action on the ground of Chinese expansionist aggression. And yet this same Government is willing to continue and expand trade in strategic materials with China. We are selling wheat, wool and steel to China. The wheat is used to feed the armies of China. The wool is used to clothe the armies of China. The steel is used to equip the armies of China. Yet the Government which is willing to encourage this trade is the same Government which now sends Australian troops, in the words of the Prime Minister, to prevent 'the downward thrust of China'. The Government may be able to square its conscience on this matter, but this is logically and morally impossible.

Arthur Calwell, *Commonwealth Parliamentary Debates*, House of Representatives,  
4 May 1965, Vol.46, pp.1102–7.

Prime Minister Menzies replied:

**Source 8.28**

It has to be remembered that Australia has commitments as a member of the South East Asia Treaty Organisation and that one of the protocol nations under S.E.A.T.O. is South Vietnam. We have commitments in respect of Malaysia which have been fully stated and debated in this House. We have joint interests with the United States of America and with New Zealand under the Security Treaty between Australia, New Zealand and the United States of America, and we have, of course, a responsibility for the defence of Australia, including Papua and New Guinea ... It is in the continuing interest of this country – to put it on no higher ground than that – to be regarded and to remain as a valued ally of the United States, which is, in this part of the world, our own most powerful ally. I would hate to be the head of a government which had to say to the United States on an occasion like this: 'Sorry; we can do nothing about it. We will help you with debate in the United Nations. We will offer some fine words and some good sentiments. But, as for practical action, no; that is for you. American soldiers from the Middle West can go and fight and die in South Vietnam, but that is not for us'. I think that is a disastrous proposition for any opposition to put forward.

Robert Menzies, *Commonwealth Parliamentary Debates*, House of Representatives,  
4 May 1965, Vol.46, pp.1102–7.

**FOCUS QUESTION 8.5**

Examine Source 8.28. What arguments does Prime Minister Menzies use in response to Opposition Leader Calwell?

Jim Cairns, an ALP Member of Parliament, commented:

I suggest that what is happening in South Vietnam and other places in Asia is not something which, like an avalanche, is flowing full of Asian aggression and Communism towards Australia. That is not the correct interpretation of what is happening. In that sense there is not a threat to Australia. The present situation does not compare with the situation in relation to Japan in the 1940s ... We do not face today an expeditionary force of the kind we faced in those years. We face today a situation which, in each country, has a tendency to turn round and round in itself in the process of change, due to the force of vigour and terror that is in those places. This is an inevitable condition that comes out of decades of poverty and suppression. That is the inevitable condition that flows from the lives of those people. There is nothing that can be done by military force, the exercise of public relations or the glibly spoken word of the Prime Minister in this Parliament, to stop those things happening. These changes will go on because the people cannot live in their present circumstances ... A great deal depends on the economic and political conditions in the area concerned.

Jim Cairns, *Commonwealth Parliamentary Debates*, House of Representatives, 4 May 1965, Vol.46, pp.1102–7.

## Newspapers react to deployment of the first battalion

The day after Prime Minister Menzies' announcement of troop deployment to Vietnam, most newspapers strongly supported the decision.

*The Age* wrote:

The decision by the Australian Government to send a battalion to South Vietnam is a grave one and commits Australia to a more direct role in this cockpit of war where the conflict for power between Communist China and the West in Southeast Asia has [begun] ... These are inescapable obligations which fall on us because of our geographical position, our treaty commitments and friendships ... There was no alternative but to respond as we have.

Editorial in *The Age*, 30 April 1965, in Jo Leech, *Debating Australia's Future 1960-2000: Vietnam*, HTAV Collingwood, 2005, p.13.

The *Sydney Morning Herald* wrote:

As a member of SEATO Australia has a treaty responsibility to help in the defence of South Vietnam. If South Vietnam is allowed to fall to Communism, then the extension of Communist influence down through the Malay Peninsula to the shores of Australia is inevitable.

From Australia's point of view the definitive battle against Chinese Communist expansionism is being fought in Vietnam, and it is a battle in

*Continued...*

### Source 8.29



↑ Source 8.30 ALP politician, Jim Cairns

### FOCUS QUESTION 8.6

Examine Source 8.29. What does Jim Cairns see as the real problems in Southeast Asia?

### Source 8.31

### Source 8.32

... *Continued*

which national honour and national interest dictate that Australia should play a positive part ... the dispatch of an Australian Battalion has greater importance than the numbers actually involved would suggest. Its real importance lies in the ranging of Australia beside the United States in a demonstration that resistance to Communist aggression is not the concern of any one country but of all free countries.

Editorial in the *Sydney Morning Herald*, April 30 1965, in Jo Leech, *Debating Australia's Future 1960-2000: Vietnam*, HTAV Collingwood, 2005, p.12.

The *Courier Mail* in Brisbane wrote:

**Source 8.33**

This is a grim week-end for every Australian. We are now at war ... Australia is to fight on the Asian mainland to aid the United States in stopping the advance of Communism, which threatens us directly. ... Our government has made the decision in our name and that is our duty. The nation now has to support that ... For us the cost will not be light. Brave men will die in jungles without even seeing the other side's soldiers; many others will be wounded. At home we will have to commit a great deal of our manpower and our economy to the fight. The easy days ended with the Prime Minister's announcement on Thursday.

Editorial in *The Courier Mail*, 8 October 1965, in Jo Leech, *Debating Australia's Future 1960-2000: Vietnam*, HTAV Collingwood, 2005, p.14.

In contrast to the overwhelming majority of editorial opinions, *The Australian* opposed the government's decision to increase Australia's commitment to Vietnam.

*The Australian*, a national newspaper, wrote:

**Source 8.34**

The Menzies Government has made a reckless decision on Vietnam ... It has decided to send Australian soldiers into a savage revolutionary war ... so that America may shelve a tiny part of her embarrassment ... It could be that historians will recall this day with tears.

Editorial in *The Australian*, 30 April 1965, in Jo Leech, *Debating Australia's Future 1960-2000: Vietnam*, HTAV Collingwood, 2005, p.13.<sup>17</sup>

An article on the front page of *The Australian* on the same day foresaw the implications for National Servicemen.

**Source 8.35**

### **DRAFTEES MAY HAVE TO GO, TOO**

The Government will face the explosive issue of conscripts fighting overseas unless the Vietnam War collapses before the end of the year.

The new National Service Scheme is to strengthen the standing Army and every draftee will go in a Regular Army unit after six months training.

*Continued...*

...Continued

With Army resources stretched to the limit in Malaysia and Vietnam it seems unavoidable that some conscripts will serve overseas.

Defence Correspondent, *Draftees may have to go too*, 30 April 1964, The Australian Newspaper, Australian Politics website.<sup>18</sup>

### USING HISTORICAL SOURCES AS EVIDENCE 8.4

Drawing on Sources 8.31–8.35, complete the following table.

Newspaper	Supports deployment?	Reasons	Key quotes

## 8.2 Protests against the Vietnam War

### INQUIRY QUESTION

How did the protest movement contribute to the withdrawal of Australian troops from the Vietnam War?



↑ **Source 8.36** Seventy thousand people gathered outside the Melbourne Town Hall during the Vietnam Moratorium protest against Australia's involvement in the Vietnam War, Victoria, 8 May 1970. This would be the first of three such mass protests in Australia against the war.

## Introduction

This section will consider the events that led to the withdrawal of troops and the eventual termination of the National Service Scheme. It will also look at the ways in which individuals and groups expressed their opposition to both conscription and the war itself.

As the Gallup polls in Sources 8.9 and 8.23 show, both conscription and Australia's commitment to war in Vietnam were supported by the majority of Australians during most of the war. However, as the war dragged on and as casualties mounted, more and more people began to question Australia's continuing involvement. The protest movement began to shift from being a predominantly youth-based movement from the so-called radical fringe to one that represented a far more diverse cross-section of the community – including women, academics, teachers, school students, churches, unions and concerned members of the public.

Factors that contributed to changing people's attitudes to the war included:

- key events
- television news reports
- the nature of the warfare in Vietnam
- the war appearing unwinnable.

## Key events

Listed in the table below are events that influenced attitudes towards the war.

18 August 1966	Battle of Long Tan 18 Australians died, including 11 National Servicemen
31 January 1968	Tet Offensive begins On the Buddhist holiday of Tet, the Viet Cong launched a multi-pronged attack on many cities in South Vietnam, including Saigon where they breached the US embassy
25 January 1969	After preliminary negotiations began in 1968, the Peace Talks got underway in January 1969
25 July 1969	US President Nixon announces the beginning of the withdrawal of 25 000 US troops from South Vietnam as part of the 'Vietnamization' of the war
15 October 1969	US Moratorium 250 000 people protest in Washington, with an estimated 2 million people protesting across the United States
22 April 1970	Announcement that 8RAR soldiers would not be replaced This began Australia's partial withdrawal of troops
8 May 1970	First Australian Moratorium Over 200 000 Australians took part The largest protest was in Melbourne, where 70 000 people attended
18 September 1970	Second Australian Moratorium 100 000 people participated across Australia
30 June 1971	Third Australian Moratorium 110 000 people participated across Australia

2 December 1972	Australian Labor Party (ALP) win federal election on a platform of reforms, including the ending of conscription and the cessation of involvement in Vietnam
18 December 1972	Last of the Australian troops withdrawn from Vietnam A small group of soldiers remain to guard the Australian Embassy
17 January 1973	Paris Peace Accords signed to end the war The parties agreed 'on the basis of respect for the Vietnamese people's fundamental national rights and the South Vietnamese people's right to self-determination'

## The television war

For the first time in history, Australians were confronted with the reality of war in their living rooms on the nightly news. As one serviceman commented, 'What we did on the battlefield in the morning was on our living room TV screens at night'.<sup>19</sup>

Journalist and historian Paul Ham commented:

It was the novelty of seeing war for the first time that led many Australians to oppose it. By 1968, more than 95 per cent of Australian homes had access to television, and four million Australians – a quarter of the country – tuned into the news between 7pm – 8pm.

Source 8.37

Paul Ham, *Vietnam—The Australia War*, Harper Collins, Australia, 2010, Kobo edition, Chapter 31, p. 12.

Activist Joan Coxsedg recalled:

As I watched the nightly horror show on our TV, and saw napalm raining down on defenceless human beings and defoliants destroying their crops and the earth itself, I was outraged and felt I must do something to stop it. I joined SOS and although it was part of a broader movement it had a distinctive character of its own by focusing on conscription and women who opposed the war, some of them had never been involved before in anything vaguely political.

Source 8.38

*Joan's Story*, 2021, Victorian Labor website.<sup>20</sup>

Michael Hyde also remembered:

I sat with friends watching the event on TV as the Vietnamese defeated the might of the USA and sent them, panic struck scurrying onto helicopters and out to waiting over crowded aircraft carriers.

Source 8.39

Michael Hyde, *All Along the Watchtower: memoir of a Sixties Revolutionary*, Vulgar Press, Melbourne, 2010, Kobo edition, Part 10, p.2.

## RESEARCH TASK 8.2

Watch 'This Day Tonight: Draft Dodger (1971)' on YouTube. Explain the story of Michael Matteson. What is unique about his interview?

Source 8.40

## FOCUS QUESTIONS 8.7

1. How did television contribute to the shift in public opinion?
2. Was its impact different from other media? Why?

### The 'dirty war'

As more information about the nature of the war became available, it came to be seen as a 'dirty war', as Labor politician Clyde Holding argued:

[It was called a 'dirty war'] [b]ecause of the weapons used – weapons like the chemicals which destroy crops, the gasses which paralyse men, napalm (jellied petrol) which incinerates those on whom it is dropped, and the bullets fired by the Armalite rifle, which are an improved version of the universally condemned 'dum dum' bullets. Because the 'Viet Cong' are so intricately intermingled with the peasants and the villages of South Vietnam that to destroy the Viet Cong it is necessary to destroy whole villages – old and young men, women and children, 'innocent' and 'guilty' alike.

Clyde Holding, *The moral and political issues involved in Vietnam and conscription*, pamphlet, 1966, Reason in Revolt website.<sup>21</sup>

### The war appears unwinnable

In their official history of the Vietnam War, historians Ashley Ekins and Ian McNeill evaluate how the press responded to the public's growing disenchantment with a war that was looking increasingly unwinnable.

Source 8.41

During 1968 the press, which had generally supported the Vietnam War or stuck to feel-good stories of heroism and mateship, vigorously changed its tune. The media reacted to growing middle-class disenchantment with the war: they did not initiate or promote anti-war feeling; they reflected and fed off it. The 1968 Tet Offensive was the catalyst for this shift in the media's line on the war, the moment most of the press joined the anti-war bandwagon. Editors, sensing dismay and revulsion in their readers, viewers and listeners, sought to reflect the public mood (they ran a business, after all), and soon both press and public tended to share and mutually reinforce their response to the war. In 1970, the number of Australian casualties in the Vietnam War was 438 with 2790 wounded. Increase in casualties also impacted people's opinion on the war.

Ashley Ekins and Ian McNeill, *Fighting to the Finish- The Australian Army and the Vietnam War*, Allen & Unwin, NSW, 2011, p.281.

In considering why people protested against the government's position on conscription and deployment in Vietnam, we need to consider the broader social changes that were taking place during the 1960s. This was a decade in which people felt increasingly empowered to question authority and challenge societal norms. They were finding their voice on issues such as civil rights, environmental degradation, nuclear disarmament, feminism and war. As Bob Dylans 1964 song put it, 'the times they are a-changin'".

### Save Our Sons (SOS)

The reintroduction of Compulsory National Service and the deployment of troops to Vietnam provoked immediate responses. One of the first protest groups to form in 1965 was Save Our Sons (SOS), comprised mostly of women. Established in Sydney, it quickly spread around Australia to include representation in Melbourne, Brisbane, Adelaide, Perth and Newcastle. This mostly middle-class, non-sectarian community group fought for the rights of conscientious objectors and draft resisters and for the repeal of the National Service Act. SOS was active throughout the entirety of the war.

### A historian's perspective

Michael Caulfield in his book *The Vietnam Years: From the Jungle to the Australian Suburbs* considers what was different about the SOS and how the public reacted to the group.

SOS was a different form of protest and it brought about strong reactions, particularly from men. The Holy Mother and Wife was out of the kitchen and on the streets and many men found it not just unseemly, but downright threatening. The women were spat on, publicly abused, had their placards ripped from their hands and their pamphlets crumpled and thrown in their faces. They were called Communists, neglectful wives, and the worst insult of all, 'bad mothers'. But they brought respectability and potency to civil protest that had never been there before. What, after all, was more understandable and praiseworthy than a mother protecting her child?

Michael Caulfield, *The Vietnam Years - from the Jungle to the Australian Suburbs*, Hachette, Sydney, 2007, p.116.

One woman recalled her reasons for action:

Irene Miller, a mother of ten from the middle-class Melbourne suburb of Beaumaris, explained that her opposition to conscription and deployment stemmed from her experiences as a young ambulance driver in Britain during the Second World War. Having seen firsthand the horrific impact

*Continued...*

### DID YOU KNOW?

By 1965, the Australian population was over 11 million. Nearly 40 per cent were under 20 years of age and did not have personal experience of the World Wars or the Great Depression that had shaped the views of their parents and grandparents. The number of universities and university colleges had almost doubled since 1945 to 11, and enrolments had increased from 32 453 in 1948 to 83 320. Monash University welcomed its first students in 1961.

Anonymous, VCE Attitudes to the Vietnam War, April 28 2018, Shrine of Remembrance Education Program.

Source 8.42

Source 8.43

...Continued

of war on young men, she decided to do everything possible to stop it happening to others including her own children.

H. Smalley, personal communication, 19 May 2012.

Jean McLean, the founder of the Melbourne SOS, recalled the hostility directed towards her.

**Source 8.44**

Our phones were tapped and I used to get death threats. I once had a call and a man's voice said I know where you were today. The Police and Post Office officials said there is nothing that we can do. One night I had the kids in the bath and realised that someone was outside lighting matches, I told the kids to stay quiet and yelled out to the next door neighbours.

*Jean's Story*, 2021, Victorian Labor website.<sup>22</sup>

### USING HISTORICAL SOURCES AS EVIDENCE 8.5

1. According to Michael Caulfield in Source 8.42, what was SOS's point of difference as a protest group?
2. Why does he think they succeeded?
3. Why did men seem so opposed to the members of the SOS?

#### How did the SOS protest?



← **Source 8.45** SOS members, <https://libcom.org/history/1965-72-sos-australian-mothers-resist-vietnam-war-conscription>

SOS members engaged in a range of tactics both secretive and in the public domain. Joan Coxsedge describes how she would ferry draft resisters to and from safe houses around Melbourne hidden under a blanket on the back seat of her car.<sup>23</sup> Other activities that kept their message in the public eye included:

- sit-ins
- silent vigils

- petitions
- letters to Members of Parliament
- handing out leaflets at military barracks and train stations from where National Servicemen would depart for their training.

While Mark Dapin considers their intentions to be well-meaning, he notes that ‘the women of the Save Our Sons Movement, who tirelessly picketed the Army inductions of thousands of young men, perhaps did not realise that many had not asked to be saved’.<sup>24</sup>



↑ **Source 8.46** Paul Rigby cartoon ‘Mum: Where Did You Spring From?!!!’, courtesy *The West Australian* 1966, in *Australia’s Vietnam War in History and Memory*, eds. Peter Cook and Corinne Manning, *La Trobe University Studies in History*, p. 56

## USING HISTORICAL SOURCES AS EVIDENCE 8.6

How is Mark Dapin’s view supported by Paul Rigby’s 1966 cartoon in Source 8.46?

Officials also opposed the SOS.

An official of the Melbourne Shrine of Remembrance turned away a group of women members of the SOS anti-conscription organisation waiting to place wreaths on the Shrine during the Anzac Day ceremony today.

The women, carrying about 20 posies with cards reading, ‘Honour the dead with peace,’ and wearing white sashes with the letters ‘SOS’, were refused entry to the Shrine.

Colonel A. N. Kemsley, the deputy chairman of the Shrine trustees, told the women, ‘I don’t want any wreaths laid in the Shrine by your organisation. You can go home and take your wreaths with you.’ The women left quietly after leaving their posies.

The *Canberra Times*, *Women ordered from Shrine*, 26 April 1966, National Library of Australia, Trove website.<sup>25</sup>

**Source 8.47**

The SOS was well-organised and many members developed links with the Australian Labor Party and trade unions, who shared their opposition to conscription and the war.<sup>26</sup>

**Source 8.48**

The Melbourne group, largely instigated by Jean McLean, was formed on 18 August [1965], ... at a meeting attended by some 50 women. They were addressed by Nola Barber, president of the Victoria ALP Central Organising Committee, as well as Alan Roberts from Monash University and Glen Tomasetti, the folk singer. This established a pattern of close association between the Melbourne SOS and the Victorian ALP. Before joining SOS, only a few of its key members were politically active; by 1967 most were involved in the ALP.

Murphy John, *Harvest of Fear: Australia's Vietnam War*, Allen and Unwin, NSW, 1993, p. 142.



↑ **Source 8.49:** More than 40 women from the 'Save Our Sons' movement held a silent protest meeting in Martin Place, Sydney, on 21 June 1966.

## USING HISTORICAL SOURCES AS EVIDENCE 8.7

1. What tactics did the SOS use to get their anti-war and anti-conscription message to the public?
2. Examine Source 8.49. Describe what you see, and the significance of the event.

### The Fairlea Five

In 1971, in an attempt to combat the group's activities – in this case handing out leaflets about conscientious objection to boys registering for National Service at the Department of Labour and National Service – the Melbourne City Council resorted to the dormant By-Law 418 that resulted in five members of SOS being charged, convicted and jailed in the Fairlea Women's Prison. Describing it as 'one of Australia's most-publicised sets of protest against the Indochina war and conscription', the *Tribune* (the official newspaper of the Communist Party of Australia) reported on the five SOS members who were dubbed the 'Fairlea Five' – Joan Coxsedge, Jean McLean, Chris Cathie, Jo MacLaine-Cross and Irene Miller. The Fairlea Five received extensive media attention. This resulted in vigils outside the prison in support of the women and the SOS. Due to public pressure, they were released 11 days into their 14-day sentence. Unions stopped work in support of the women; the assistant secretary of the Seamen's Union said his union objected to 'the jailings and everything connected with the Vietnam War'.<sup>27</sup>



↑ **Source 8.50** Jean McLean, (holding child), in April 1971, at a rally to celebrate her release from Fairlea prison in Fairfield. Pictured with union leader George Crawford, at the microphone, and fellow Fairlea Fivers Jo MacLaine-Cross and Joan Coxsedge. Credit: Communist Party of Australia (Victorian Committee) Collection



↑ **Source 8.51** Thousands of people gathered outside the Melbourne Town Hall during the Vietnam Moratorium protest march against Australia's involvement in the Vietnam War, Victoria, June 1971.

## The Moratorium movement

Inspired by the US Moratorium in October 1969, Australia's first Moratorium took place on 8 May 1970. It was the largest Australian public anti-war demonstration of that time. The second Moratorium took place on 18 September 1970 and the third on 30 June 1971. The objectives of the Moratorium were twofold: to end conscription and to bring the Australian troops home. The slogan of the Moratoriums was 'stop work to stop the war'.

Jim Cairns, Chair of the Victorian Vietnam Moratorium Campaign, had this to say on democracy and the right to protest:

### Source 8.52

Some ... think that democracy is just Parliament alone ... But times are changing. A whole generation is not prepared to accept this complacent, conservative theory. Parliament is not democracy. It is one manifestation of democracy ... Democracy is government by the people, and government by the people demands action by the people ... in public places all around the land.

*Leadership of the Vietnam Moratorium Campaign,*  
Australian Living Peace Museum website.<sup>28</sup>

In a newsletter, the SOS said this of the Moratorium.

### Source 8.53

Vietnam Moratorium an overwhelming success – Tens of thousands of demonstrators participated in the Australia-wide Vietnam Moratorium. The number far exceeded anticipation. For many weeks local groups, universities, offices, factories and businesses planned this all-important event.

Jo Leech, *Debating Australia's Future 1960–2000: Vietnam*, HTAV Collingwood, 2005, p. 17.



→ **Source 8.54** Jim Cairns taking part in the Vietnam Moratorium demonstration in Melbourne, 8 May 1970. He is alongside SOS's Jean McClean (in sunglasses).

## Student protest

Students were also active in the protest movement, as Sources 8.55–8.57 reveal.

Today's senior school students are not little children to be protected from public controversies. They are nearing the age when they can be conscripted, and will soon have to vote. They are required to read widely, exercise judgment and think clearly about foreign matters.

Source 8.55

Vietnam Moratorium, Campaign Prospectus, May 1970 in Jo Leech, *Debating Australia's Future 1960–2000: Vietnam*, HTAV Collingwood, 2005, p.16.



↑ Source 8.56 Protesters including secondary school students march during the Vietnam Moratorium in Sydney, 9 May 1970.

Helen Voysey from Castle Hill High School addressed the Moratorium crowd in Sydney.

The high school administration didn't like it when we took the Moratorium into the schools. It bugs them to see the kids that they are training for their society turn around and question the values of that society. Not only did they not like it, they tried to suppress it. They tried their hardest to stop us bringing just basic democratic rights, like discussion, like wearing a Moratorium badge, into the schools. As we are here in numbers, we want to stop this rotten war in Vietnam, and we are doing our best within our schools to talk about this,

*Continued...*

Source 8.57

... *Continued*

to show other kids what we think is the truth about Vietnam. Support us. We need your support in fighting against the administration that is trying to keep discussion and debate out of the schools. Thank you.

Helen Voysey, *Transcript of speech to Moratorium crowd*, 1970, Sydney, National Film and Sound Archive of Australia website.<sup>29</sup>

## USING HISTORICAL SOURCES AS EVIDENCE 8.8

1. Examine Sources 8.55 to 8.57 and list some of the reasons why students protested.
2. What resistance did they meet and why?

## Reactions to the Moratorium

Victorian Premier Sir Henry Bolte watched the Moratorium march on television. He sought to minimise its impact.

### Source 8.58

They were obviously all of the one ilk [type] ... I think at the maximum there were only 20 000 to 30 000 people. You've got to remember there are 40 000 students in Melbourne. Obviously only a small percentage of them turned up.

Peter Cook and Corinne Manning (eds), *Australia and Vietnam 1965–1972*, La Trobe University, Melbourne, 2002, quote from *The Age* 9 May 1970 p.5.

### Source 8.59

#### Big M-day sit-down for peace

Seventy thousand citizens took to Melbourne streets yesterday, shouting, 'Peace', 'Stop the war!'

A thousand police, many armed with pistols and shotguns waited. But hardly a punch was thrown.

The riots did not happen. The city's Vietnam Moratorium was peaceful.

White-helmeted police watched impassively as the march – massive, colorful, peaceful – flooded central Melbourne in autumn sunshine like a tidal wave.

The Moratorium leader, Dr Jim Cairns, exultantly claimed that 100 000 people were in Bourke Street for the 12-minute sit-down.

'Nobody thought this could be done,' he cried, on top of a car in the middle of the street. 'But it has been done.'

Around him sat a sea of people stretching from Queen Street to Spring Street.

All sorts of people. Students with Red Indian headbands; tough-looking wharfies; middle-aged men in business suits; mini-skirted girls; workers in construction helmets. But the young predominated.

Max Beattie and staff reporters of 'The Age', *Big M-day sit-down for peace*, 9 May 1970, from *The Age* website.<sup>30</sup>

### DID YOU KNOW?

The Moratorium marches included a broad cross-section of Australian society, with people from all walks of life joining to show their support to bring an end to conscription and the war. Many people had never protested before this.

## The conservative response

By the time of the 8 May 1970 Moratorium, the conservative side of politics was no longer speaking with one voice. The Minister for Labour and National Service, Billy Snedden, decried the demonstrators as ‘bikies pack-raping democracy’, and the Liberal Premier of Victoria, Henry Bolte, downplayed the size and significance of the protest. However only two months earlier, the Young Liberal Movement had condemned National Service and called on the government to ‘rapidly phase out’ the scheme and to instead improve pay and conditions in the Regular Army.<sup>31</sup> Additionally, the Liberal Reform Group, made up of ‘independent Liberals’, had been actively opposing conscription and the Vietnam War since 1966, while continuing to support the Liberal and Country Parties’ domestic policies.<sup>32</sup>

## Conclusion

Prior to the Moratorium demonstrations in Australia, US President Richard Nixon, in 1969, had already announced his ‘Vietnamization’ strategy (see Section 7.6). In Australia on 22 April 1970, Prime Minister John Gorton announced that soldiers of 8RAR would not be replaced when their tour ended. Thus began Australia’s gradual withdrawal of troops. In September 1971, the government also shifted on conscription when the Minister for the Army, Andrew Peacock, stated that, although National Servicemen would continue to be sent to Vietnam, they would not be compelled to go.<sup>33</sup> In December 1972, the newly elected Labor Party Prime Minister, Gough Whitlam, announced that ‘there would be no further call up’.

Historian and teacher Jo Leech sums up the impact of the protest movement.

The debate over conscription helped to reshape and unite the protest groups from across the country, culminating in the Moratorium marches. Although the Moratorium and other protest movements did not prompt the change in government policy, they vividly demonstrated that a significant proportion of Australian society did not support the war, the way it was fought or the nature of Australia’s commitment.

Source 8.60

Jo Leech, *Debating Australia’s Future 1960–2000: Vietnam*, HTAV Collingwood, 2005, p. 10.

## USING HISTORICAL SOURCES AS EVIDENCE 8.9

1. Why did Australia withdraw from the conflict in Vietnam?
2. To what extent did the protest movement influence the outcome of Australia’s commitment to the Vietnam War?

## The impact of the Vietnam War on Australian popular culture

Pop culture is defined by the *Cambridge English Dictionary* as music, TV, cinema and books that are enjoyed by ordinary people, rather than experts or highly educated people. Pop culture is delivered through mediums such as music, art, literature and fashion and it appeals to the majority of society, particularly young people. Pop culture is dynamic and often reflects the feelings of society

at a particular time. This section provides a glimpse into aspects of Australia's pop culture clearly influenced by the Vietnam War.

## Australian film

In 1979, the film *The Odd Angry Shot* was released. It is described as both a war and an action film. The film was based on a book by William Nagel and was written and directed by Tom Jeffrey. The film follows an Australian reconnaissance team in Vietnam. Jeffrey commented that 'people didn't really want to know about the Vietnam War in those days. The nature of the war and the reaction it had in our society was just something people didn't want to talk about. People thought the movie was going to be a huge risk because of that'.<sup>34</sup>



→ Source 8.61 Movie poster for the Australian film, *The Odd Angry Shot*

## Australian television

Historian Jeff Doyle commented on Australian television of the time:

### Source 8.62

In the late 1980s Australian culture had begun the processes of rewriting Vietnam as a more positive account of the experience of war, and even as a means of reconciliation of Australia within the Asian sphere. Two television mini-series appeared in 1987, Simpson LeMesurier's *Sword of Honour* and Kennedy-Miller's *Vietnam*. Both presented a set of 'representative'

Australians, and both map a route of redemptive loss and reintegration via the varied experiences of the Vietnam War.’

Jeff Doyle, *Dismembering the Anzac Legend: Australian Popular Culture and the Vietnam War*, *Vietnam Generation*: Vol. 3, No. 2, Article 10, Digital Commons Lasalle University website.<sup>35</sup>

Janet Bell explained how the mini-series *Vietnam* was made to feel so authentic.

*Vietnam* makes evocative use of archival footage from the era to establish the verisimilitude of the mid-1960s. It’s a backdrop of Beatlemania, flower power and a growing horror as the nightly news presents the carnage of the war in Vietnam. The directors even go so far as to inject Megan (Nicole Kidman) and her mother Evelyn (Veronica Lang) into archival news footage from the early 1970s as they join hands with hundreds of thousands of others who are opposed to the war in Vietnam.

Source 8.63

Janet Bell, *Vietnam*, Curator’s notes, Australian Film and Sound Archive of Australia website.<sup>36</sup>

## Music

The song ‘I Was Only 19’, written by John Schumann and released in 1983, reflects on the experience of a soldier and his experience of the Vietnam War. Schumann did not serve in Vietnam, however he knew many men who did go. A portion of the song’s lyrics was inscribed on the Australian Vietnam Forces National Memorial in 1992. It reads:

Then someone called out ‘contact’ and the bloke behind me swore  
And we hooked in there for hours, then a God almighty roar.  
Frankie kicked a mine the day that mankind kicked the moon.  
God help me, he was going home in June.

Source 8.64

Quotations from *The Wall Of Words* at the Vietnam Veterans Memorial, Canberra, Australia, Vietnam Veterans Association of Australia website.<sup>37</sup>

The Museum of Australian Democracy blog on ‘Songs of Influence’ assesses the impact of the song and includes a comment from John Schumann.

The song’s rich visual detail and laconic delivery, expressing a man’s bewilderment, bitterness and painful regret, is often credited for changing negative attitudes towards Vietnam veterans. It gave a voice to those who had previously felt shamed or shunned because of their involvement in a war which was, in its later years, widely opposed. Anti-war protests culminated in the 1970–71 Vietnam Moratorium campaign of mass marches and demonstrations across Australia. ‘What the song did, in my view’, writes Schumann, ‘was to demonstrate to Australians that you can  
...Continued

Source 8.65

*Continued...*

oppose a war vigorously but still be supportive and respectful of the men and women the government sends to fight it’.

Stephanie Pfenningwerh, *Songs of Influence*, 16 July 2013, Museum of Australian Democracy website.<sup>38</sup>

Perhaps the most famous song in Australia’s pop culture is Cold Chisel’s ‘Khe Sanh’, released in 1978. The National Film and Sound Archive of Australia added the song to the Sounds of Australia registry, which details songs that have shaped our history.

### Source 8.66



↑ **Source 8.67** Singer Jimmy Barnes performing in 1980 with the band Cold Chisel, whose 1978 song ‘Khe Sanh’ has come to represent Australia’s involvement in Vietnam for many people

‘Khe Sanh’ was the first Cold Chisel single and remains a popular anthem about the Australian experience of the Vietnam War and the lingering after effects on those who served there. It is composed as a series of verses without a chorus, a structure which reflects the restless mood of the lyrics about a man who can’t stop wandering and settle down.

*Khe Sanh* only reached No. 41 on the national charts, its sales potential hindered by a commercial radio ban. The ban was ostensibly because of drug and sexual references, but composer Don Walker suspected it was more to do with a broader unwillingness to come to grips with the aftermath of a failed war.

*Khe Sanh* by Cold Chisel, 1979, National Film and Sound Archive of Australia website.<sup>39</sup>

### USING HISTORICAL SOURCES AS EVIDENCE 8.10

1. Research the lyrics of ‘Khe Sanh’ by Don Walker and ‘I Was Only 19’ by John Schumann. Can you identify a common theme?
2. Using Source 8.65 discuss why ‘I Was Only 19’ is said to have changed negative attitudes towards veterans.

## Photography and the war

The most famous photograph of the Vietnam War was taken by Sergeant Mike Coleridge who was an Army Public Relations photographer. This photo has been sandblasted onto the steles of the National Memorial to the Australian Vietnam Forces in Canberra.



← **Source 8.68** Sergeant Mike Coleridge's famous photo. Members of 5 Platoon, B Company, 7RAR, waiting to board an Iroquois helicopter to return to Nui Dat, 26 August 1967.

The status of this photograph as the epitome of Australia's experience in Vietnam has come about for a number of reasons. It is a well-composed action shot with a close-up group of young Australian men in the foreground, tired but successful after their mission. It shows helicopters, singly the most dominant symbol of the war in a US-influenced public mind. The photograph has been seized by publishers of both fiction and non-fiction and used on endless book covers, in magazines, journals and newspapers across the country. It has become etched into Australia's consciousness because of its constant reproduction. The image is also non-confronting. There is a safeness about it that almost belies the fact it was taken in a war zone; it could be from any training exercise in Australia. What it ultimately reveals is that Australians have claimed an image that is comfortably familiar in a popular culture influenced by American stereotypes to represent their actions in Vietnam.

### Source 8.69

Simon Forrester, *Impressions: Australians in Vietnam: Photography, art and the war*, 3 March 2021, Australian War Memorial website.<sup>40</sup>

## Conclusion

Often pop culture that defines an era is created at a later time with the benefit of hindsight; for example, only Source 8.69 was created during the Vietnam War. Popular culture, by its very nature, can have significant influence and reach. Historical accuracy can give way to a more entertaining version of events that in turn can determine how subsequent generations come to know and understand history.

## 8.3 Differing experiences of war veterans: including the Welcome Home Parade 1986

### INQUIRY QUESTION

What were the experiences of Vietnam War veterans on their return home?



↑ **Source 8.70** The dedication of the Australian Vietnam Forces National Memorial, 3 October 1992

### Introduction

The experiences of Vietnam veterans demonstrate the complexity and challenges that a return to civilian life can entail. While some war veterans were able to return home to resume previous occupations, use their defence force training and skills to help build their careers and take part in public life, others found their return to civilian life to be a more negative experience that significantly impacted their lives. Pervading the recollections of many Veterans has been a sense of resentment and bitterness at the protest movement and the negative reception many believe they received from the government and the public on their return to Australia. Encapsulating this sense of bitterness, this anonymous poem was submitted to *The Sun* newspaper in Melbourne at the height of the Moratorium protests in 1970. It is thought to have been a group effort by soldiers on an Australian base.<sup>41</sup> The poem also appears on the 3 Royal Australian Regiment (3RAR) website, which states that the poem was found by a recruit while going through Singleton doing recruit training.<sup>42</sup>

#### Source 8.71

#### THERE IS NO WAR IN VIET-NAM

Take a man and put him alone,  
Put him 6000 miles from home,  
Drain his heart of all but blood,  
And make him live in sweat and mud  
There is a life I have to live  
while my soul to the devil I give,  
But you free-boy in your easy chair  
you don't know what it's like over there  
You have your fun without near trying

while over there our boys are dying  
You burn your draft cards and march at dawn  
you plant your sign's on parliament lawn  
You want to ban THE BOMB  
but there is no war in Viet-nam  
You take your drugs and have your fun  
then refuse to carry a gun  
There is nothing else for you to do  
And I'm supposed die for you  
I'll hate you till the day I die  
you made me see my mate cry,  
I saw his arm a bloody red,  
I heard them say 'This one's dead'  
It's a heavy price he had to pay  
Not to live another day  
But he had the guts to fight and die  
And he paid the price and what did he buy  
He bought a life by giving his  
But who gives a damn what a soldier gives  
His wife, His mum or maybe His son  
But there about the only one's for you see,  
There is no war in Vietnam.

'There is no war in Vietnam', (n. d.), Charlie Company 3 RAR Vietnam 1971.<sup>43</sup>

### USING HISTORICAL SOURCES AS EVIDENCE 8.11

1. How would you describe the tone of the poem in Source 8.71?
2. What does it reveal about the gulf between the servicemen and attitudes to the war believed to be widely held in Australia?

In his book *Australia and the Vietnam War* historian Peter Edwards identifies the following factors as contributing to a high degree of resentment among Vietnam veterans.

- Accusations that they had burned villages and killed children.<sup>21</sup>
- Cool indifference from family, friends, workmates, and the general community.
- The Department of Veterans Affairs failing to offer the understanding and support they deserved.
- Nashos being conscripted to fight in an unpopular war while those the same age had prospered in security and peace.
- Disillusionment during the later stages of the war about being obliged to risk life and limb in a war that had lost support of the government and the people.

*Continued...*

**Source 8.72**

...Continued

- Fighting in a losing cause that some felt was an unworthy one.
- A dishonourable manner of withdrawal from the conflict.
- Where lives and limbs had been lost to mines removed from the Dat Do barrier minefield.<sup>22</sup>
- Not receiving the heroes' welcome that they deserved, as upholders of the Anzac tradition. Some felt they had been betrayed by the government's military and civilian agencies, by the established ex-service organisations, and by the whole community.

Adapted from Peter Edwards, *Australia and the Vietnam War*, Australian War Memorial, NewSouth Publishing, Sydney, 2014, pp. 277–279.

Edwards suggests that many of these stories 'may have been exaggerated or imported from the American experience'.<sup>44</sup> He posits that 'there had clearly been some serious failures in the repatriation procedures, caused as much by what was not done as by what was done'.<sup>45</sup> An example of this was that National Servicemen were discharged as soon as their two years were completed and flown home, often separately from their unit. They were given one night's accommodation and a train ticket to their home address ... with no debriefing or offers of continuing assistance. Edwards argues that 'the absence of positive support or comprehension of the difficulties of reintegration into a totally different environment created a vacuum in which stories of hostile incidents could multiply and the sense of abandonment and disorientation could fester'.<sup>46</sup>

Ex-Servicemen Bob Freshfield supports Edwards' argument.

**Source 8.73**

The manner of our homecoming affected the way in which we Vietnam Veterans recovered from the war, those who arrived late at night to no fanfare and the seeming indifference of the military had more trouble adjusting to life at home than did those whose return was more public and who had had the benefit of a couple of weeks, debriefing and unwinding on board HMAS Sydney, with those they had served with, before reaching Australia.

Bob Freshfield, 'When we came home ... the aftermath', the Vietnam Veterans Federation of Australia website.<sup>47</sup>

Vietnam veteran Danny McIver came home by plane.

**Source 8.74**

Now I was in the jungle fighting the night before I came home and that same time the next night I was bathing my baby in the sink. Terrible. Absolutely terrible. Not enough time. You know, one minute I was in a theater of war next minute I was home.

Danny McIver in Peter Yule, *The Long Shadow*, Australian War Memorial, NewSouth Publishing, Sydney, 2021, p.136.

## USING HISTORICAL SOURCES AS EVIDENCE 8.12

Using Sources 8.72–8.74, identify the reasons why some returned servicemen found it difficult to adjust to civilian life.

### Veterans and ex-service organisations

Veterans' experiences with ex-service organisations varied widely and in many cases reinforced a sense of betrayal. In the 1960s, the Walgett ex-services club in northern New South Wales enforced a colour ban that directly excluded Aboriginal ex-servicemen from membership. In Melbourne, ex-serviceman Bill Hindson felt ostracised by the attitudes of older diggers. He recounted the reception he received at his father's Returned Services League (RSL) Club.

I'd been asked to tell them about my experiences and I did that and the old diggers said that wasn't a war, that I didn't know what a war was. I was just devastated. I never joined the RSL after that.

Source 8.75

Bill Hindson, in Michael Caulfield, *The Vietnam Years*, Hachette, Sydney, 2007, pp. 443–444.

On the other hand, Mark Dapin describes the 1972 Sydney Anzac Day parade in which the RSL honoured Vietnam veterans by inviting them to lead the parade.

One-hundred-and-fifty-thousand people turned up to watch the march, vastly outnumbering the attendance of any demonstration against the war anywhere in Australia ever.

Source 8.76

Mark Dapin quoted in David Stephens, 'Mythbusting about Vietnam: highlights reel', 2012, Honest History website.<sup>48</sup>

### The Vietnam Veterans Association of Australia

Disappointed with the response from the government and the RSL to the evidence of physical and mental health issues among Vietnam veterans, some returned servicemen formed their own association in 1979: the Vietnam Veterans Action Association (VVAA). Their focus was twofold:

1. The need for counselling services specifically for veterans suffering from post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD)
2. The impact of the toxic herbicides (collectively known as 'Agent Orange') used in Vietnam on veterans' and their families' health and wellbeing.

Edwards sees the campaigns on these issues as reinforcing 'the idea that Vietnam was an especially evil war'.<sup>49</sup>

## An ex-serviceman's perspective

Ex-serviceman Geoff Shaw's experience exemplified the concerns of the VVAA. He described the struggles he had in getting his health concerns recognised by the Department of Veterans' Affairs (DVA) so that he could be considered for a pension.

### Source 8.77

I started getting in the system, breaking down ... suffering PTSD and all these other illnesses that I've got now, like tinnitus and diabetes ... neuro-myopathy ... seeing a psychiatrist and all that in 91, and I was working at the time at Tangentyere Council ... It took me seven years going and seeing a psychiatrist, going down to hospital, getting booked in to the psychiatric ward down in Adelaide. I've done a month up in the Darwin private hospital, see all these shrinks and so on, nothing eventuated.

Round about ... 1997 they accepted my application for a pension. It took me seven years, seven years! Christ! I'd been to Malaya and Borneo, two tours of Vietnam, and it took them seven years to realise that I'm a bit messed up in the brain.

Cadzow and Jebb eds, Geoff Shaw quoted in *Our Mob Served: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander histories of war and defending Australia*, Aboriginal Studies Press, Canberra, 2019, p.124.

## USING HISTORICAL SOURCES AS EVIDENCE 8.13

1. Examine Source 8.77. What does Geoff Shaw mean when he says that he 'started getting into the system'?
2. How might experiences such as his lead to resentment of the way veterans were treated when they returned home?

## The Agent Orange controversy

Agent Orange was just one of many chemical weapons developed by the United States for use in Vietnam. 'Agent Orange' has become a generic term used to describe these types of weapons.

↓ **Source 8.78** Agent Orange being sprayed during the Vietnam War and its aftermath.



*A Brief History of the VVAA* reports that the VVAA ‘fought an uphill battle against government indifference’ on this issue.<sup>50</sup> In response to concerns about the impact on veterans and their families of herbicides used by the Americans in the Vietnam War, the VVAA pushed for a Royal Commission. In 1983, the Evatt Royal Commission into the ‘Use and Effects of Chemical Agents on Australian Personnel in Vietnam’ was established.

After two years of hearing evidence, the Commission found that there was no causal link between Agent Orange and health problems suffered by veterans and their families. Justice Evatt ‘laid the blame for the veterans’ problems on the normal response to war – acute stress’ and blamed ‘the ‘pseudoscientists’, environmentalists and a credulous media for creating unsubstantiated fears among veterans that the chemicals were responsible for their health problems’.<sup>51</sup>

The finding left much bitterness within the Veteran community. The Agent Orange controversy did not end with the findings of the Royal Commission. By the early 1990s many studies into the effects of herbicides used in Vietnam had been published, bringing into doubt some of the Commission’s findings. Activist veterans – including those from the breakaway veterans’ group, the Vietnam Veterans Federation of Australia – have continued to campaign for recognition of health issues affecting both themselves and their families.

Drawing on her professional and personal experience, psychologist Stella van Tongaren detailed the long-term effects of the Vietnam War on returned servicemen.

Our men were brought home with the feeling that nothing had been achieved; that all the suffering, death and deprivation that they had endured counted for nothing. They were sneaked home. No words of thanks from our politicians, neither from the party who sent them nor from the party that ordered them to be brought back. It was as though they did not exist. Even the RSL treated them tardily. A recipe for post-traumatic stress if ever there was one!

Source 8.79

Combat stress is well known and documented. During World War II, one man in ten was withdrawn from action for psychiatric reasons. (U.S. Army records: 1969). In Korea, psychiatric evacuations were reduced to 6% by the giving of immediate on-site treatment by clinicians. (Bourne: 1980). Our Army Medical officers must have known these facts. So why were our traumatised Vietnam veterans neglected for so long?

One researcher, (Pealer: 1980) described evidence of bitterness, anger, anxiety, depression, and inability to get close to important others as being so severe they led sometimes to suicide, sometimes to severe disruption of family lives, thus effecting even the next generation. Uncontrollable rage caused some to lash out at whoever was nearby, even much-loved wives and children. Others were so alienated and depressed that they suicided.

Add to all this, the toxic effects of exposure to pesticides (Agent Orange). The Australian, van Tiggelen, (1983, 1984,) describes the long-term effects of pesticides on the liver and brain function. Another researcher, (Jerina: 1984) describes how epoxides can be covertly bound to DNA, proteins and lipids resulting in mutagenicity. Too many veterans

*Continued...*

... *Continued*

fathered deformed children for this matter not to be considered as resulting from exposure to the defoliants of Vietnam.

Not enough research has been done in Australia, but American research is considerable.

And, over and above the sufferings of the veterans, there is the ongoing mental suffering of their mothers, wives and loved ones.

How do I know all this? Because I am a university trained psychologist, and my son is a long-term traumatised Vietnam veteran.

Stella van Tongeren, 'Vietnam: What For?' circa 2002, Vietnam Veterans Museum website.<sup>52</sup>

### USING HISTORICAL SOURCES AS EVIDENCE 8.14

1. What was the outcome of the 1983 Evatt Royal Commission into the 'Use and Effects of Chemical Agents on Australian Personnel in Vietnam'?
2. Using Source 8.79, identify why van Tongeren believes that the bitterness of Vietnam veterans was justified.
3. Why does van Tongeren believe she has authority to speak on this subject?

## The Welcome Home Parade, 1987

### History and the collective memory



↑ **Source 8.80** Vietnam War Welcome Home Parade Sydney, 1987

On 3 October 1987, an apparent wrong was righted when soldiers who had served in Vietnam participated in the Australia Vietnam Forces National Reunion Day and Welcome Home Parade in Sydney.

The event was organised by a group of ex-servicemen who had attended a parade for American Vietnam veterans in Chicago in 1986. They brought the idea back to Australia, and with support from the RSL and state and federal governments, they organised the event.

Fourteen years after the last Australian soldier returned from Vietnam, the Australian community finally gave veterans the welcome home they had been waiting for.

For two hours yesterday the streets of Sydney from the Domain to the Town Hall were thronged with a crowd, estimated by police to be at least 110 000 strong, cheering and applauding the Welcome Home Parade of about 22 000 Vietnam Veterans from Australia, New Zealand the United States and South Korea.

Source 8.81

Many veterans were stunned by the depth of feeling in the public response. They had gone along expecting to meet old mates and to show their pride in having served their country but, having experienced some animosity as a result of their service in Vietnam, they did not expect the massive public show of support ...

A spokesman for the parade organisers, Mr Charles Wright, said the day had gone extremely well, and he was pleasantly surprised by the public turn out. 'The overwhelming impression I got today was that people had been waiting a long time for this opportunity to express their feelings for Vietnam veterans. There was a real warmth and a sincerity out there.'

John Jesser, Defence and Aviation Writer, *The Canberra Times*, 4 October 1987.

ABC-TV covered the event.

Clive Hale was the principal commentator for the ABC coverage of the march which was televised nationally. Hale describes the march as an 'all-encompassing' event in which anyone associated with Vietnam could take part: soldiers, nurses, war correspondents, entertainers, the Salvation Army. He describes the parade as 'this much delayed "welcome home" from Vietnam.'

Source 8.82

Hale tells viewers that 'We've waited for this for so long.' And later, in reference to the 500 soldiers who died and were each represented by a flag in the parade: 'They didn't choose the war but they did their duty as they saw it ... they fought professionally and well whilst people behind were not delivering their supplies, not delivering their mail, or were condemning them and demonstrating against them and treating them as a scapegoat for an unpopular war.' He urged viewers to think of 'those kids' who were over there before demonstrating against a war in the future.

A placard held by a member of the crowd echoed this sentiment: 'Welcome. It's about time.'

'Vietnam Veterans Parade Sydney 1987', video, *ABC TV*.<sup>53</sup>

A 2007 school textbook wrote this about the Welcome Home Parade:

**Source 8.83**

The first significant act of commemoration of the Australian experience of war in Vietnam was in 1987, when the Vietnam Veteran's Association of Australia organized a national 'Welcome Home' march through Sydney. Twenty-five thousand veterans took part. For many this was the gesture of reconciliation by Australia that they had been looking for. This was the admission that they should not have been shunned and abused on their return from Vietnam. The nation was acknowledging the value of what they had done. For these men, they could now let go of much of their anger and feelings of rejection.

Ryebuck Media, *Australia and the Vietnam War*, Department of Veterans Affairs, Australian Government, 2007, p.100.

Also writing in 2007, historian Michael Caulfield had this to say:

**Source 8.84**

There were never any organized, formal protests against soldiers in Australia. On the contrary, welcome home parades were held for a number of battalions throughout the duration of Australia's presence in Vietnam. The parades attracted large, affectionate crowds and only an occasional, often a lone dissenter. But it seems that it was the personal that hurt: it only needed one person to attack their service for some veterans to get the sense that everyone thought like that, everyone looked at you like that.

Michael Caulfield, *The Vietnam Years*, Hachette, Sydney, 2007, p.403.

## USING HISTORICAL SOURCES AS EVIDENCE 8.15

Sources 8.83 and 8.84 were written in the same year, which suggests that the writers had the same information and evidence available to them. Identify the main points of difference between them.

### Perception versus evidence

Perceptions and evidence often clash in the telling of history. As historians conduct more research and find new evidence, perceptions do not necessarily adjust accordingly.

In his 2019 book, *Australia's Vietnam: Myth vs History*, Mark Dapin set out to find the evidence behind many of the accepted 'truths' that have become part of Australia's Vietnam War narrative; a narrative that he admits both he and other 'well-meaning journalists and historians'<sup>54</sup> have promulgated uncritically. He challenges the 'partially folkloric saga of victimhood and rejection which has grown up since the war.'<sup>55</sup> One such 'truth' is that returning troops were not welcomed home and that the 1987 march finally righted this egregious wrong.

In 2013, the *Sydney Morning Herald* was perpetuating this line when it said that 'None of them [returned service personnel] were welcomed – the official 'welcome home' parade for Vietnam veterans was not held until 1987'.<sup>56</sup>

Dapin's research found the opposite. Between 1966 and 1971, there were at least 16 welcome home parades that have 'disappeared from memory'.<sup>57</sup>

Indeed, the *Sydney Morning Herald* itself had reported on many well-attended ‘welcome home’ parades that warmly greeted returning regiments throughout the war.

Source 8.85 are some of the examples listed by Dapin.

300 000 Sydney people came to watch and welcome them [1RAR] home, with cheering, hand-clapping, torn-up telephone books and office stationery.

Source 8.85

Sydney yesterday gave Australia’s newest Anzacs warm welcome. It was a magnificent military parade.

Sydney yesterday gave its by now traditional welcome to homecoming troops from Vietnam – claps, cheers, confetti and ticker-tape.

Streamers and ticker-tape showered over 1100 Vietnam veterans who marched through the city yesterday to the cheers of tens of thousands of onlookers.

The Army, Navy and Air Force marched through a storm of streamers and torn paper in Sydney yesterday to the final welcome this city will give to veterans of Vietnam.

Mark Dapin, *Australia’s Vietnam: Myth vs history*, NewSouth Publishing, Sydney, 2019, pp. 68-69.

Welcome Home Parades were also held in other cities including Brisbane and Adelaide.



↑ **Source 8.86** Australian Vietnam Forces Welcome Home Parade. Identified marching centre of the image (with beard) is Ian Carlyle Affleck who served with the RAAF in Vietnam in 1971. On 3 October 1987 over 22000 Vietnam veterans marched through the streets of Sydney in the parade.



↑ **Source 8.87** Welcome Home Parade, Brisbane, 12 December 1970

In reflecting on how his book might be received, Dapin cites military historian Craig Stockings, who sees myths appealing to sentiment far more than reason:

**Source 8.88**

Many of the misconceptions of Australian military history have survived the blows landed by academics and historians for decades. Each time an individual ‘story’ might lurch or stumble for a short time, but then it seems to grow back undiminished.

Craig Stockings in Mark Dapin, *Australia’s Vietnam – Myth vs History*, NewSouth Publishing, Sydney, 2019, p.19.

Historian Peter Yule, in his book *The Long Shadow*, reflects on the homecomings in previous wars.

**Source 8.89**

It is an abiding grievance of many Vietnam Veterans that ‘Having served our country, there was no returning home parade for me or other survivors of the Vietnam War.’ After the first and second World Wars most service personnel came home after the wars were over and victory had been won, but in Vietnam the war continued after all Australians had returned. Further, one-year tours meant that veterans returned over many years and parades would have been hard to organize except for those who returned on *Sydney*. The closest parallel is with the Korean War, when many units received a ‘welcome home’ parade, but there were no victory celebrations or nationwide welcome home for those who served. If this was a source of anger and discontent for Korean War veterans, it never became a public issue as it did for Vietnam Veterans.

Peter Yule, *The Long Shadow*, NewSouth Publishing, Sydney, 2021, p.135.

**FOCUS  
QUESTION 8.8**

Examine Source 8.89. Why does Peter Yule consider the Korean War veterans’ homecoming to be the closest parallel to that of the Vietnam veterans?

## Misremembering

In recounting the Nadine Jensen incident, Peter Yule provides us with an example of the disjunct that can occur between the historical telling of an event that is supported by evidence (in this case, photographs and a court case) and memory. The incident illustrates the problematic nature of memory and historical understanding.



→ **Source 8.90** The Nadine Jensen incident

## The Nadine Jensen event

At the first march in Sydney, on 8 June 1966, a solitary protester, Nadine Jensen drenched herself in a mixture of red paint, kerosene and turpentine and threw her arms around IRAR's [Commanding Officer] Lieutenant Colonel A.V. Preece, and she also bumped into several other soldiers smearing their uniforms. She did not throw paint over any soldiers. The following day she pleaded guilty to offensive behaviour, being fined six dollars and placed on a 12-month good behaviour bond. This incident appears to be the origin of the stories that soldiers on welcome home parades had red paint or even pig's blood tipped over them although there were no such incidents reported at any other welcome home march.

**Source 8.91**

Peter Yule, *The Long Shadow*, NewSouth Publishing, Sydney, 2021, pp.136–137.

## The memory

A member of the 1RAR (who served from 1965 to 1966) was taking part in this march and recalls:

We got red paint thrown all over us and people said we were baby killers ... the CO had paint thrown all over him and so did a lot of guys ... we didn't understand because we had just come back ... Two days prior we had been in War Zone D, patrolling, and then we were back in Sydney and all these people were throwing paint over us and demonstrating and screaming out at us and we couldn't really work out what was going on.

**Source 8.92**

Peter Yule, *The Long Shadow*, NewSouth Publishing, Sydney, 2021, p. 137.

Michael Caulfield, producer of the television series *Australians at War*, reflected on this incident.

**Source 8.93**

Every Vietnam veteran I have talked with remembers the woman and the red paint [at the June 1966 Sydney parade], the perceived insult to their uniform, to their service. But not one of them spoke of the half a million people, or the enthusiasm of the reception. One single action, one potent photograph has become the accepted truth ... Most Australians still supported our involvement in the war, as well as conscription; in fact three out of every five people said they did.

Michael Caulfield quoted in David Stephens, 'Mythbusting about Vietnam: highlights reel', 2012, Honest History website.<sup>58</sup>

### Using historical sources as evidence 8.16

1. What do these accounts in Sources 8.91 and 8.92 reveal about the importance of evidence in the telling of history?
2. How does Michael Caulfield explain why Vietnam veterans may have interpreted this one event in such a negative way?

## 8.4 Chapter summary

Here are some dot-points for you to consider and add to:

### Continuity

- Fear of communist expansion.
- The United States remained a close ally of Australia.
- The Government introduced another National Service Scheme.

### Change

- The National Service Scheme required overseas service for conscripts.
- The protest movement including the moratoriums challenged the government's policy on Vietnam.
- Vietnam veterans formed their own association to lobby for better repatriation services.
- A Royal Commission investigated the possible links between the use of Agent Orange in Vietnam and health issues suffered by veterans.
- The 1987 Welcome Home Parade was one of many that welcomed returning service personnel home.

## 8.5 End-of-chapter activities

### Consolidating your understanding

Complete the following questions to help revise the key events, ideas, perspectives and experiences of conscription and deployment, the protest movement and the differing experiences of war veterans.

## Evaluating historical significance

1. Using Source 8.36–8.41, discuss why the Vietnam War appeared to be ‘unwinnable’.
2. How do Sources 8.55 and 8.56 add to our understanding of the ways in which school students contributed to the Moratorium movement?
3. What do Sources 8.73–8.75 and 8.77 uncover about the differing experiences of war veterans?
4. What do Sources 8.90–8.93 reveal about the different ways in which the Welcome Home Parade in 1966 was remembered?

## Constructing an argument: essay writing

1. Using the perspectives in Sources 8.8–8.14 and your own knowledge, analyse Australia’s attitude to conscription in the mid-1960s.
2. Evaluate the extent to which the SOS influenced the withdrawal of troops from Vietnam and the ending of conscription. Use evidence to support your response.

## Extension reading

Cadzow, Alison., Jebb, Mary Anne. (Ed) *Our Mob Served-Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander histories of war and defending Australia*, Aboriginal Studies Press, Canberra, 2019.

Peter Cook and Corrine Manning, (Ed). *Australia’s Vietnam War in History and Memory*, La Trobe University, Melbourne, 2002.

Michael Crawford, *The Vietnam Years: from the jungle to the Australian suburbs*, Hachette, Sydney, 2007.

Mark Dapin, *The Nashos’ war: Australian national servicemen and Vietnam* Penguin, Australia, 2014.

Mark Dapin, *Australia’s Vietnam – Myth vs History*, NewSouth Publishing, Sydney, 2019.

Peter Edwards, *Australia and the Vietnam War*, Australian War Memorial, NewSouth Publishing, Sydney 2014.

Ashley Ekins and Ian McNeill, *Fighting to the Finish- The Australian Army and the Vietnam War*, Allen & Unwin, NSW, 2011.

Paul Ham, *Vietnam – The Australia War*, Harper Collins, Australia, 2010.

Michael Hyde, *All Along the Watchtower: memoir of a Sixties Revolutionary*, Vulgar Press, Melbourne, 2010.

Murphy, John, *Harvest of Fear: A History of Australia’s Vietnam War*, Allen & Unwin, Sydney, 1993.

Ryebuck Media Pty. Ltd. *Australia and the Vietnam War*, DVA, Canberra, 2007 (for primary sources and activities).

Christina Twomey, *The National Service Scheme: Citizenship and the Tradition of Compulsory Military Service in 1960 Australia*, Australian Journal of Politics and History, Vol.58, Issue 1, March 2012.

Peter Yule, *The Long Shadow*, Australian War Memorial, NewSouth Publishing, Sydney, 2021.

# CHAPTER 9

## The evolving nature of enlistment and service in the military forces



## Chapter timeline

World events	Date	Australian events
	<b>1947</b>	World War II Women's Auxiliary Services disbanded
	<b>1950</b>	Women's Royal Australian Air Force (WRAAF) formed
	<b>1951</b>	Women's Royal Australian Army Corps (WRAAC) formed Women's Royal Australian Naval Service (WRANS) formed
	<b>1967</b>	First Australian woman deployed overseas to Singapore in 121 Signals Squadron
UN Year of Women	<b>1975</b>	Racial Discrimination Act makes it unlawful to act in any way that involves a distinction, exclusion, restriction or preference based on race, colour, descent or national or ethnic origin, including employment and service in the Australian Defence Force (ADF). Military chiefs establish committee to explore opportunities for increased female participation
	<b>1977</b>	WRAAF absorbed into mainstream RAAF
	<b>1978</b>	Federal Government approves the full integration of women into the other services
	<b>1981</b>	NORFORCE (North-West Mobile Force) Indigenous Regional Force Surveillance units formed
	<b>1982</b>	Pilbara Regiment Indigenous Regional Force Surveillance units formed
	<b>1983</b>	Australia ratifies <i>Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women</i> (CEDAW) but supports exclusion of women from combat Women now allowed to serve on naval ships
	<b>1984</b>	Final disbandment of WRAAC Sex Discrimination Act grants an exemption to the ADF in respect of women in combat
	<b>1985</b>	Final disbandment of WRANS Far North Queensland Regiment formed
	<b>1986</b>	ADF Academy opens and gives women identical degree training alongside male colleagues
	<b>1987</b>	First two female RAAF pilots enlisted (Robyn Williams and Deborah Hicks)
	<b>1992</b>	Prime Minister Paul Keating announces women can serve in all Army, Navy and Air Force units (except in direct combat units)

World events	Date	Australian events
	1992	Prime Minister Paul Keating's Redfern Speech Removal from the Defence Act of the last piece discriminatory policy that had exempted only Indigenous men from compulsory National Service in the event of war Recognition of a group of Indigenous ex-servicemen who had been members of the Northern Territory Special Reconnaissance Unit that patrolled Australia's northern coastline during World War II The end of the ban on homosexual people in the ADF

## 9.1 Introduction

### INQUIRY QUESTION

How has the Australian Defence Force become more inclusive?

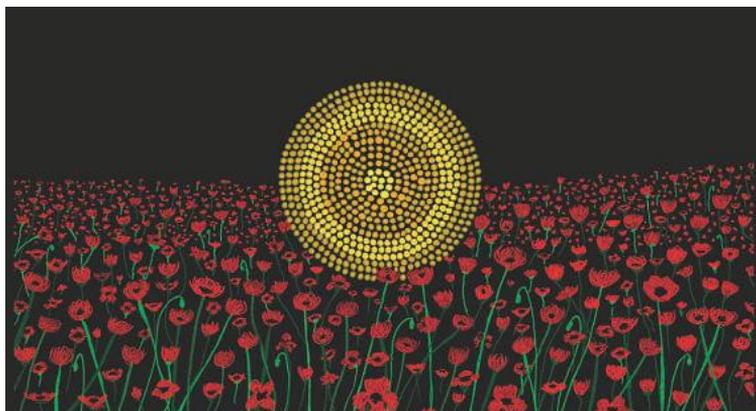
#### DID YOU KNOW?

In 1976 the three arms of the military merged to become the Australian Defence Force (ADF).

Since the 1950s, the Australian military has evolved and modernised to keep pace with the shifts within Australian society towards greater inclusion of marginalised groups. As society has changed and as governments have legislated to reflect this change, the Australian Defence Force (ADF) has also acted to overturn previous exclusionary policies. This chapter will look at the impact of past and present ADF policies and the service experiences of:

- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people
- women
- Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer, Intersex, Asexual, plus (LGBTQIA+) people.

## 9.2 The ways in which Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders people served in the ADF



↑ Source 9.1 Artwork via Lee Anthony Hampton from Koori Kicks Art.

## INQUIRY QUESTION

How has the relationship between the Australian Defence Force and Indigenous service personnel evolved since World War I and World War II?

### A matter of race

#### World War I

At the outset of the war in 1914, many would-be Indigenous recruits were rejected on the grounds of race, although some did manage to enlist. By 1917, after the failure of the first referendum on conscription, restrictions were eased to encourage more recruits. A new Military Order stated: 'Half-castes may be enlisted in the Australian Imperial Force provided that the examining Medical Officers are satisfied that one of the parents is of European origin'.<sup>1</sup>

#### World War II

In 1940, the Defence Committee deemed that Aboriginal Australians were 'neither necessary nor desirable' as recruits, based partially on the belief that white Australians would object to serving with them. Restrictions loosened when Japan entered the war in December 1941 and more manpower was needed. This resulted in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander men enlisting in large numbers. In proportion to population, Torres Strait Islander men contributed more to the war effort than any other Australian community, despite never receiving equal pay.<sup>2</sup>

#### Post-1992

On 10 December 1992, Prime Minister Paul Keating delivered a speech to launch the International Year of Indigenous People. In what became known as the 'Redfern Speech', Keating spoke to non-Indigenous Australians when he said:

... in truth, we cannot confidently say that we have succeeded as we would like to have succeeded if we have not managed to extend opportunity and care, dignity and hope to the Indigenous people of Australia – the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Island people ... Where Aboriginal Australians have been included in the life of Australia they have made remarkable contributions ... they were there in the wars.

#### Source 9.2

Paul Keating, *Redfern address*, December 10 1992, ABC Education website.<sup>3</sup>

In 1992, two other events occurred that reflected the ongoing evolution of the Australia Defence Force's attitude towards Indigenous Australians:

- the removal from the Defence Act of the last piece of discriminatory policy that had exempted Indigenous men from compulsory national service in the event of war
- the belated recognition of a group of Indigenous ex-servicemen who had been members of the Northern Territory Special Reconnaissance Unit that patrolled Australia's northern coastline during World War II. Their contribution was finally acknowledged when they received back pay and medals for their service.<sup>4</sup>

Prime Minister Keating's acknowledgement of the part played by Indigenous Australians in the armed services highlighted the paradox that despite a history of dispossession and disempowerment, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people were willing to fight for the society that treated them so poorly. Until 1962, Aboriginal Australians had not been able to vote in federal elections, and until the referendum of 1967 they had not been counted in the census of the Australian population. Despite their exclusion from so many rights taken for granted by non-Indigenous Australians, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people had served in every conflict and commitment involving Australian defence contingents since the Boer War. This included both world wars and the post-World War II period, as well as military deployment in Korea, Malaysia, Borneo, Singapore and Vietnam. They also participated in Australia's contributions to UN peacekeeping missions around the world.

Exact numbers are hard to ascertain as individuals enlisting in the defence forces were not asked if they had an Indigenous background until after 1980. However, the process of identifying Indigenous servicemen and women continues through the Australian War Memorial (AWM).

In the *Racial Discrimination Act, 1975* (Cth), the Federal Government introduced laws against discrimination on the grounds of race.

### Source 9.3

The Racial Discrimination Act makes it unlawful to act in any way that involves a distinction, exclusion, restriction or preference based on race, colour, descent or national or ethnic origin which has the purpose or effect of nullifying or impairing the recognition, enjoyment or exercise, on an equal footing, of any human right or fundamental freedom in the political, economic, social, cultural or any other field of public life, including employment and service in the Australian Defence Force (ADF).

Department of Defence, *Human Rights Racial Discrimination Act*, Australian Government website.<sup>5</sup>

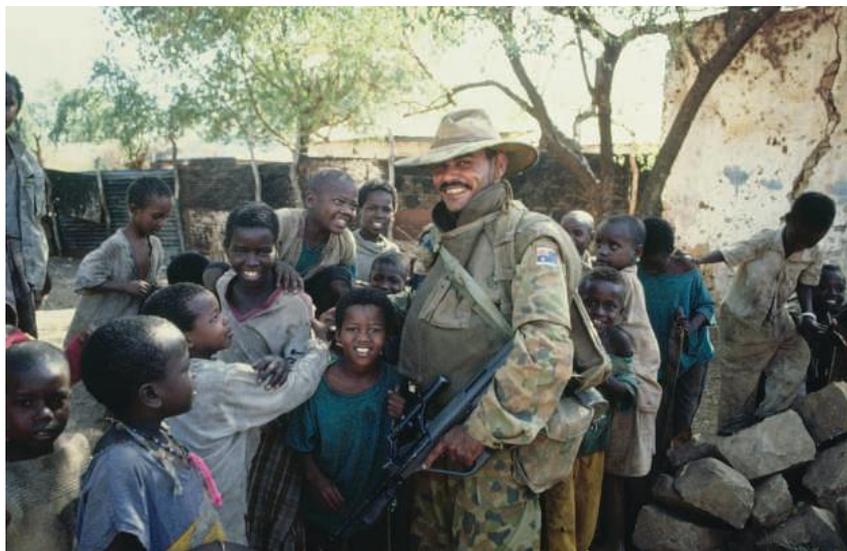
## Surveillance

Opportunities for Indigenous people to serve increased during the 1980s, when the ADF moved to promote Indigenous enlistment in the formation of three regional force surveillance units as part of the Army Reserve:

- North West Force (Norforce), 1981
- Pilbara Regiment, 1982
- Far North Queensland Regiment, 1985.

These units were largely made up of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander personnel.<sup>6</sup>

## Peacekeeping



↑ **Source 9.4** Private Graeme 'Brownie' Brown, an Aboriginal member of 1RAR, is surrounded by children in Baidoa, Somalia. He served as a peacekeeper with the Australian contingent to the Unified Task Force in Somalia.

Australians have been involved in peace operations since the first United Nations operation in Indonesia in 1947 and have continued to be involved in 'impartial, multinational, military-based interventions into areas of conflict'.<sup>7</sup> Indigenous servicemen and women are among the 30 000 Australians who have served in peacekeeping missions around the world.

Peter Londey, historian of Australian peacekeeping, describes the role of the peacekeepers:

Peacekeepers do many things ... Their aims may be concrete ones, of restoring order, providing infrastructure, de-mining, observing and reporting. But an equally important part of their aim is often – perhaps always – to inculcate the idea of 'peace', to model non-violent ways of dealing with situations, to intervene (subtly, one hopes) in how a society works to make it work more in the way we think it should. Peacekeepers try to change the interior of people's minds ...

**Source 9.5**

Peter Londey, *Official and Unofficial Histories of Peacekeeping*, in AGORA, vol.44, no.2, HTAV, Melbourne, 2009, p.XX

### Profile of Indigenous serviceman, Reg Saunders

Reg Saunders was born in 1920 and died in 1990. His experience in the Army illustrates how service could provide opportunities for equality and advancement; opportunities which were not always available in the broader Australian society where prejudice and discrimination continued.



↑ **Source 9.6** Three members of 3RAR confer with a North Korean interpreter (*left*), circa 1950, during the Korean War. The soldiers are (from left to right) Warrant Officer W.J. Harrison, Lieutenant Reg Saunders and Private W.H. Alberts.

A Gunditjmara man from South-West Victoria, Reginald ‘Reg’ Saunders was the son of Chris Saunders (who was a World War I veteran) and the brother of Harry (who was killed in action in New Guinea in 1942). During World War II, Reg Saunders became the first Indigenous man to be commissioned as an officer in the Australian Army in this conflict. At the end of the war, he volunteered for service in Japan as part of the British Commonwealth Occupation Force (1946–52), only to be rejected after the Australian Government had reinstated the ruling that servicemen had to be of ‘substantially European origin and descent’: a policy that Saunders publicly described as ‘narrow-minded and ignorant’. In 1949, after pressure from returned Indigenous ex-servicemen and the Returned Services League, this colour bar was finally overturned. However, as historian Noah Riseman points out ‘the services did not promote Indigenous enlistment but they did at least permit it on a case-by-case basis’.<sup>8</sup>

On return to civilian life, Saunders’s Aboriginality precluded him from a grant of land under the 1946–61 Soldier Settlement Scheme. The sense of exclusion was compounded when the government allocated a part of Lake Condah reserve, on which Saunders and other Indigenous returned servicemen had lived, to white ex-servicemen.

When the Korean War began in 1950, Saunders re-enlisted and was one of approximately 30 Indigenous Australians to serve there.<sup>9</sup>

Holding the rank of Captain, Saunders commanded a company at the battle of Kapyong in April 1951. His unit helped bring the Chinese and North Korean forces to a temporary halt. This earned them the US Presidential Distinguished Unit Citation for ‘extraordinary heroism and outstanding performance’.<sup>10</sup>

Joseph Vezgoff served with Saunders in Korea and said ‘he was a fine company commander, Reg Saunders ... [he] was a down-to-earth guy ... he mixed with the troops and he moved around [the platoons] and was a good tactician’.<sup>11</sup>

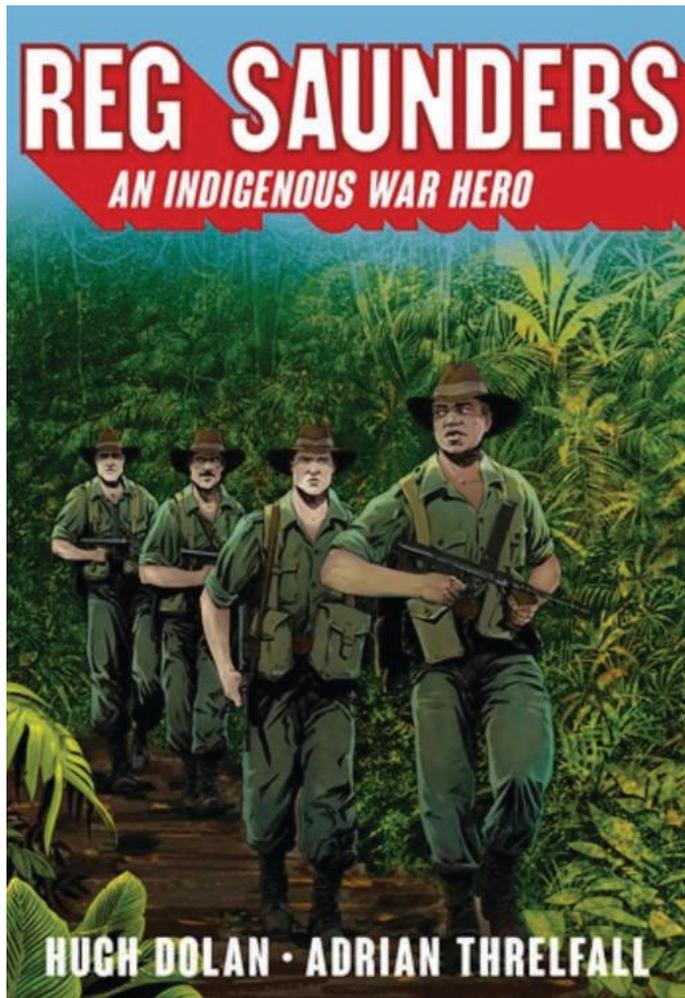
In civilian life, Saunders worked for the betterment of Aboriginal people and in 1971 was awarded a Member of the British Empire medal (MBE) for this work. He was involved with the Returned and Services League (RSL) but that involvement ceased when the outspoken president of the ACT Branch, Alf Garland, suggested that Aboriginal people be blood tested to determine their rights to government benefits. In a 1986 interview, Saunders railed at the suggestion. ‘They can take all the blood they want from me and they’ll never find out what I am – least of all an Aborigine – bloody stupid!’<sup>12</sup>

Reg Saunders died in 1990 and his ashes were scattered near the Lake Condah Aboriginal Reserve.<sup>13</sup>

### Recognition

Since 2001, Reg Saunders has been honoured in the following ways:

- a road in Canberra has been named ‘Reg Saunders Way’
- a room in the Canberra RSL is named after him
- the RSL established a Reg Saunders Scholarship
- the AWM Western Gallery and Courtyard were renamed in Saunders’s honour – the first sections of the AWM to be named after any Australian.



← **Source 9.7** A graphic novel, *Reg Saunders: An Indigenous War Hero*, was published by NewSouth in 2015. The cover image was based on a photo of Saunders leading his company in Korea.

## USING HISTORICAL SOURCES AS EVIDENCE 9.1

1. Using information from the profile of Reg Saunders, provide examples of how he found a level of equality in the armed services while still suffering discrimination at home.
2. What does the recognition of Reg Saunders and his achievements suggest about the evolution of the ADF towards the contribution of Indigenous service personnel, particularly when compared with the attitudes during earlier wars? (See 'A matter of race' on page 273.)

### Why did Indigenous men enlist?

Like non-Indigenous Australians, Indigenous Australians enlisted for many reasons as Sources 9.8–9.14 show.

The Lovett family of South-West Victoria had a long tradition of enlistment. In Source 9.8, Gunditjmara man, John Lovett recalls his family's contribution.

#### Source 9.8

There is a history of a defence of this country, by us, the Indigenous people of this country ... from ... early white settlement right through to the First World War for my family, right through to Afghanistan a couple of years ago ... 21 Lovetts served, men and women, in those conflicts.

John Lovett. Cited in Allison Cadzow and Mary Anne Jebb, eds, *Our Mob Served: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Histories of War and Defending Australia*, Canberra, 2019, p. 139.

(In 2000 a multi-story office building in Canberra was renamed the Lovett Tower in recognition of the Lovett family's contribution to the services.)

Claude Malone served in Vietnam as a combat engineer in 1971.

#### Source 9.9

My mate, Eric Law, ... joined up before me and told me about it and I joined up. We were in different units, but we ended up the same year there, in Vietnam. The reason why I joined the Army was because when I was growing up in Cherbourg, there was nothing there. Stolen wages and all that, we was getting about \$8 a week, ... then young blokes, 16–17 year old, give us nothing, and I end up in the Army.

Claude Malone. Cited in Allison Cadzow and Mary Anne Jebb, eds, *Our Mob Served: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Histories of War and Defending Australia*, Canberra, 2019, p. 86.

Historians Allison Cadzow and Mary Anne Jebb give another reason for Indigenous enlistment.

Joining the services appealed to numerous men and women with Stolen Generations childhoods. Aboriginal people who grew up in the homes and institutions spoke of an affinity with the military. Services like the Army provided a familiar sense of order and discipline. Crucially, the services also paid a wage, and fed, housed and clothed people when they turned 18 and were being forced to leave the institutions.

Source 9.10

Cadzow and Jebb eds, *Our Mob Served – Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander histories of war and defending Australia*, Aboriginal Studies Press, Canberra, 2019, p. 179.

Cadzow and Jebb (2019, p. 183) go on to report that from one institution for Indigenous children in Western Australia – Sister Kate’s Home – many of Sister Kate’s boys chose to join the armed forces serving in Borneo, Japan, Korea, Malaya, Singapore, Brunei and Vietnam.

In Source 9.11, Phil Prosser writes about his motivation for joining up.

I made up my mind that I was going to use the Army, or the services, to benefit me at the better part of my life. Cos to me it was a way from getting away from this welfare mentality that you could see what was happening in the terms of the old Native Welfare days. The way they treated Aboriginal people or Aboriginal people were treated. And so to me it was a way out.

Source 9.11

Noah Riseman, *Equality in the Ranks – the Lives of Aboriginal Vietnam Veterans*, *Journal of Australia Studies*, Routledge Australia, vol.36, no. 4, 2012, p. 414.

Called up in 1972, Karajarri traditional owner, Gordon Marshall’s battalion was next in line to go to Vietnam but the war ended before they were deployed. Even though Indigenous men could claim exemption under the National Service Act 1964, Marshall said ‘the thought of not going into the services ‘never really crossed their mind’ (Cadzow and Jebb page 166). In Source 9.12, he reflects on why he believes Indigenous men enlisted.

The main reason to fight would be to protect country and the thought that: “We should be fighting for our own country too” ... they weren’t fighting for the government, they were fighting for the country.’

Source 9.12

Cadzow and Jebb eds, *Our Mob Served – Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander histories of war and defending Australia*, Aboriginal Studies Press, Canberra, 2019, p. 169.

Frank Mallard was working in rural Western Australia when he decided to enlist.

Well you know I’d been working on the farms and uh I was getting £5 a week and my keep [laughing] and believe it or not, the military was offering £22 a fortnight and travel. They didn’t, at that stage, they didn’t say to you that where your travel was going to be but you get to travel overseas and I thought that was a good uh, a good idea so I um, so I joined up in ’62.

Source 9.13

Noah Riseman, *Equality in the Ranks – the Lives of Aboriginal Vietnam Veterans*, *Journal of Australia Studies*, Routledge Australia, vol.36, no. 4, 2012, p. 414.

Dja Dja Wurrung/Yorta Yorta man Graham Atkinson served in Vietnam as a National Serviceman in the Royal Australian Electrical and Mechanical Engineers. In Source 9.14, he explains why he wanted to be in the Army.

**Source 9.14**

[I]n 1967 Aboriginal people had their citizenship rights recognized ... so in 1968 when my name came out in the ballot, I agreed to do my national service training, because I felt that ... we were recognized as citizens and this was an opportunity to assert my rights as an equal citizen in this country ... I could have got an exemption because I was Aboriginal. But I chose to do my national service training, particularly with the result of the 1967 Referendum in my mind.

Cadzow and Jebb eds, *Our Mob Served – Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander histories of war and defending Australia*, Aboriginal Studies Press, Canberra, 2019, pp. 228-229.

### THE 1967 REFERENDUM

The referendum was not technically about citizenship rights, but came to be seen as such. Neither of the two amendments to the Constitution related to citizenship. Rather, they related to (a) Aboriginal Australians being included in the census with other Australians, when they hadn't been before, and (b) the Commonwealth being able to make laws relating to Aboriginal people in addition to the states.<sup>14</sup>

## USING HISTORICAL SOURCES AS EVIDENCE 9.2

Examine Sources 9.8 to 9.14. List the motives of Indigenous people who enlisted in the ADF.

## 9.3 Participation of women in the armed forces

### Introduction

By 1948, the women's auxiliary services (which were established during World War II to free up men for combat roles) had been disbanded. However, as Cold War tensions increased, women's involvement in the services was again deemed necessary to help overcome the manpower shortages. In 1950, the Women's Royal Australian Air Force (WRAAF) was formed and in 1951 the Women's Royal Australian Army Corps (WRAAC) was formed as part of the Citizen Military Force for the purpose of enlisting women to replace men when they were required to attend training. Women also served in the Australian Navy as the Women's Royal Australian Naval Service (WRANS) from 1951. It was not until the 1980s that women were no longer segregated into their own units and joined servicemen in each arm of the Australian Defence Force.

Source 9.17 is a newspaper report announcing the enlistment of women into the Citizen Military Force (CMF).



↑ **Source 9.15** Two members of the Women's Royal Australian Army Corps (WRAAC), attached to the Royal Australian Survey Corps, working on topographical survey maps. Note the Army Headquarters badges on their right arms. Picture taken in Bendigo, 1957, courtesy of the Australian War Memorial.



↑ **Source 9.16** Recruitment poster for the Women's Royal Australian Army Corps, 1963

**WOMEN TO JOIN CMF**

**Plans for 3900**

**CANBERRA, Fri. — Women are to be enlisted in the Citizen Military Forces.**

The Minister for the Army, Mr Francis, announced today that 3000 women would be admitted to a new CMF component of the Women's Royal Australian Army Corps, and 900 to a citizen branch of the Women's Royal Australian Army Nursing Corps.

Mr Francis said the citizen members of the WRAAC would be enlisted in special companies in all States for the two years part-time training.

They would train on special nights in Army training depots.

In their first year, they would receive training similar to that of women recruits of the Regular Army. In their second year, complete sections, or platoons, would receive specialist training in the signal corps and other corps of the CMF, working alongside CMF men.

Women who enlisted in Citizen Wraacs re-engaged after two years would go on to higher specialist and leadership training.

the citizen branch of the Army Nursing Corps would be trained for wartime employment in base hospitals, casualty clearing stations and other medical units.

They would train at existing CMF medical training depots and would be attached to field ambulance units and camp hospitals at annual CMF camps.

Enlistment of CMF women would begin when the Regular Army cadres needed for their administration had been organised, Mr Francis said.

The new women's CMF components would provide a trained nucleus of women to meet the Army's requirements if rapid expansion were needed in an emergency.

↑ **Source 9.17** WRAAC CMF Press Notice 1951

## FOCUS QUESTIONS 9.1

1. Examine Source 9.17. What training were women to undertake as members of the CMF?
2. What is the stated purpose for the enlistment of women into the CMF?

## DID YOU KNOW?

Australia became the last democratic country to lift the ban on married women in the public service.<sup>15</sup> Prior to this ban being lifted in 1966 (and two years later for women in the ADF), the Federal Government held fast to the notion that a married woman's place was in the home and that men were the breadwinners.

Yamatji woman, Sue Gordon served in the Women's Royal Australian Army Corps, Signals Regiment. In Source 9.18, she reflects on the importance to many women of serving with the Army.

### Source 9.18

And the way we [women] joined the services ... [was] not for patriotic reasons, I went because they were going to give me accommodation and pay me ... There were a lot of us like that. There were a lot of women who went into the Army because they were escaping alcoholic parents or something from their family life ... the Army became your family.

Cadzow and Jebb eds, *Our Mob Served – Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander histories of war and defending Australia*, Aboriginal Studies Press, Canberra, 2019, p. 181.

## The International Convention to Eliminate of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women, 1979

The *International Convention to Eliminate of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women* (CEDAW) took place in 1979. It was 'the culmination of more than thirty years of work by the United Nations Commission on the Status of Women, a body established in 1946 to monitor the situation of women and to promote women's rights'.<sup>16</sup>

A leading figure in the formation of the Commission on the Status of Women was Jessie Street who, over many decades, championed gender equality and the right of women to economic independence. Article 11 of CEDAW addresses equality in employment. It states, in part, that:

### Source 9.19

Parties shall take all appropriate measures to eliminate discrimination against women in the field of employment in order to ensure, on a basis of equality of men and women, the same rights, in particular: ... The right to the same employment opportunities, including the application of the same criteria for selection in matters of employment ...

'Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women', December 18 1979, United Nations Human Rights Office of the High Commissioner website.<sup>17</sup>

In 1983, Australia became a signatory to this Convention. However, the Australian Government continued to allow the ADF to discriminate against women by preventing them from taking up combat roles through an exemption in the *Sex Discrimination Act, 1984* (Cth). This restriction was not lifted until 2011.

## Integration

From the late 1970s, the women's services were gradually disbanded. Serving women became full members of the main armed forces.

Members of the WRAAC were integrated into the Army from the late 1970s. The WRAAC was formally disbanded in 1985. The women in WRANS were absorbed into the Royal Australian Navy during the early 1980s. However, it was not until 1992 that the HMAS *Sydney* became the first warship to permanently post women to the ship's company.

Commander Carolyn Brand became the first female Officer to command an operational establishment after she became the Commanding Officer for HMAS *Waterhen* on 30 January 1992. The Women's Royal Australian Air Force was formally disbanded in 1977 and female staff became serving members of the Royal Australian Air Force.



↑ **Source 9.20** Carolyn Brand, Commanding Officer for HMAS *Waterhen*, 1992

## Nurses

Women were deployed as service nurses in the British Commonwealth Occupation Force in Japan (1946–52), and during the Korean War (1950–53). RAAF nurses cared for injured soldiers on evacuation flights from Korea. On their arrival in Japan, the injured were cared for by mostly Army nurses.<sup>18</sup>

In Vietnam, Australian women also served as nurses. Forty-three Army nurses served between 1966 and 1973, as well as 210 civilian nurses (who were part of volunteer medical teams). Service nurses also assisted in the evacuation of the injured to Australia. Other roles for women in these conflicts included supporting the Red Cross, working as embassy staff and touring as entertainers.

→ **Source 9.22** RAAF nurses attending to injured soldiers on a medevac flight from Korea



## FOCUS QUESTION 9.2

Examine Source 9.19. What 'appropriate measures' are outlined in Article 11 of CEDAW?



↑ **Source 9.21** Flight Lieutenant (FLTLT) Robyn Williams standing next to a Royal Australian Air Force (RAAF) Macchi at RAAF Base East Sale 29 November 1988.

## Entertainers

Many female Australian entertainers supported servicemen in Vietnam, sometimes at great personal cost. Between 1967 and 1971, some fifty troupes of entertainers performed in Vietnam, including the Indigenous all-girl group, 'The Sapphires', whose story is told in a 2012 film. Entertainers were often in danger. Singer Little Pattie was airlifted to safety on the night of the Battle of Long Tan. Another singer, Cathy Wayne was murdered in Vietnam in 1969.



↑ **Source 9.23** Australian Singer Little Pattie in 2002. During the Vietnam War Little Pattie performed for Australian servicemen

### Source 9.24

In July 1969, 19-year-old Australian singer Cathy Wayne was part of the Sweethearts on Parade show performing for US Marines near Da Nang. She had just finished her set when she was shot and killed by a bullet fired from the dark. US Marine Sergeant James Wayne Killen was found guilty and jailed, only to be released on retrial. Who shot Cathy Wayne remains a mystery to this day.

Shane Green, *The Sydney Morning Herald*, 'Australia at war: the entertainers who kept spirits afloat', April 17 2015, Sydney Morning Herald website.<sup>19</sup>

## Peacekeepers

After 1988, women also served in peacekeeping missions.

### Source 9.25

During the 1990s, as peacekeeping operations began to expand and become increasingly complex, there was growing recognition of the contribution that women could make to these missions.

Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade, *Australia's involvement in peacekeeping operations*, Senate Printing Unit, Canberra, 2008, Commonwealth of Australia, p. 258.



↑ **Source 9.26** Corporal Francine Rigby and Warrant Officer Barry James, both of the Royal Australian Corps of Military Police, serving with the UN Transitional Authority in Cambodia (UNTAC). They are looking for stolen equipment in local shops and markets.

## Conclusion

In 1992, Labor Prime Minister Paul Keating announced that women could serve in all Army, Navy and Air Force units – except for direct combat units. This marked a significant milestone in the role of women in the ADF and showed the extent to which their participation had increased over the preceding four decades.

## 9.4 The question of ‘open service’ in the ADF

### INQUIRY QUESTION

To what extent has the ADF become a more inclusive organisation that reflects evolving social attitudes towards LGBTQIA+ people?



← **Source 9.27** Australian Navy, Army and Air Force personnel marched in record numbers at the 2015 Sydney Gay and Lesbian Mardi Gras. They were led by senior Defence officers – a stark contrast to the way gay servicemen and women and veterans were treated in the past.

## NOTE ON AREA OF STUDY TERMINOLOGY

While the acronym LGBTQIA+ is used today to describe gender diversity in our community, the terminology used during the time period of this study is 'homosexuals', 'lesbians', 'bisexuals' and 'gays'. This does not mean that people who identified differently were not serving in the ADF, but that these other terms were not in common usage at the time.

### Introduction

Prior to 1992, the ADF maintained a discriminatory policy against serving personnel who were identified as homosexual or lesbian; they could not serve openly and could be dismissed on the grounds of their sexual orientation. Historian Noah Riseman has written extensively on the history of this policy. In Source 9.28, he specifically comments on the events and debates leading up to the repeal of this policy.

#### Source 9.28

LGBT men and women ... were forced to conceal their sexuality or gender identity and face persecution and discharge if they were discovered. Many of these men and women displayed great resilience in navigating an institution that denied them the right to love openly or to live truly as their authentic gender. Many made their contribution at great personal cost.

Riseman, Robinson, Willett, *Serving in Silence? Australian LGBT Servicemen and Women*, NewSouth Publishing, Sydney, 2018, p. 3.

The degree of antipathy towards homosexual members of the Defence Force is evident in Source 9.29. On Anzac Day 1982, five members of the Gay Ex-Services Association tried to lay a wreath at the Shrine of Remembrance to commemorate the fallen 'brothers and sisters who died during the wars'. They were stopped from entering the Shrine by the RSL state president, Bruce Ruxton. After a brief altercation, the five men were led away by police. Ruxton was later quoted in *The Age* newspaper:

#### Source 9.29

I don't mind poofers in the march, but they must march with their units. We didn't want them to lay a wreath because we didn't want to have anything to do with them. We certainly don't recognise them and they are just another start to the denigration of Anzac Day.

Ben Winsor, 'The Secret History of Australia's Gay Diggers - An Anzac Day legend you won't find in Australia's textbooks', April 25 2017, SBS website.<sup>20</sup>



↑ **Source 9.30** (Left) Members of the Gay Ex-Services Association. (Right) Bruce Ruxton. Photo published in *City Rhythm Magazine*, 1982.

The former president of the Gay Ex-Service's Association, Mike Jarmyn, responded in the press.

We are not a political extremist group bent on the degradation of the Anzac Day tradition. We simply wish to publicly recognise the fact that gay people also gave their lives in war ...

**Source 9.31**

Noah Riseman, *Just Another Start to the Denigration of Anzac Day: Evolving Commemorations of Australian LGBTI Military Service*, *Australian Historical Studies*, 48:1, 2017, pp. 35–51.

### USING HISTORICAL SOURCES AS EVIDENCE 9.3

Examine Sources 9.28–9.31. Describe the discrimination faced by homosexual servicemen.

#### The policy

In line with the British Military Code, the ADF had banned homosexuality since the Boer War.<sup>21</sup> In 1974, the policy was more clearly articulated by the Australian Defence Minister, Lance Barnard, who described the new approach as, 'liberal, understanding, and designed to cause the least embarrassment in such situations whilst safeguarding the interests of the Service'.<sup>22</sup> Investigations of suspected homosexuality were conducted by the service police.

In Source 9.32, historian Noah Riseman describes the methods used to elicit confessions. He is drawing on oral histories and newspaper reports.

LGB service members from the 1970s and 1980s recall surveillance outside their homes, secret searches, undercover police visiting gay and lesbian establishments ... Service police asked questions about suspects' sex lives, eliciting graphic details. The interviews could go on for hours or even days until, in most cases the suspects at last cracked and confessed to be homo/bisexual. Despite this, the police would still want to know about their sexual practices and, more importantly, the names of LGB members of

**Source 9.32**

*Continued...*

... *Continued*

the forces. Service police would then extend the investigation net to target others in what became colloquially known as witch-hunts.

[Army Service Woman, Yvonne Sillet, recalled her interrogation in 1988] ‘I felt like a criminal ... Just so frightened. I thought, “This is my career gone” ... It went on and on and on.’

Riseman, Robinson, Willett, *Serving in Silence? Australian LGBT Servicemen and Women*, NewSouth Publishing, Sydney, 2018, pp. 97-98 and p.149.

This policy was enacted separately by each of the three services until the Commonwealth Government created a uniform military code through the Defence Force Discipline Act 1982 (Cth); an act that brought ADF personnel under the Australian Capital Territory (ACT) Criminal Code. Even though homosexual acts between consenting adults in private had already been decriminalised under the ACT Criminal Code, the Defence Department maintained that such acts, even when conducted off base, would continue to be prohibited.<sup>23</sup> This position was reiterated by the Defence Minister, Gordon Scholes, when he responded to a question in the Senate regarding discrimination against homosexuals in the ADF.

**Source 9.33**

A common policy regarding homosexuality is applied throughout the Defence Force. This policy recognises that condonation [acceptance] of homosexuality can prejudice effective command relationships and the maintenance of the high levels of morale and discipline necessary for the efficient functioning of the Services. It provides that, although confirmed homosexuals are not retained in the Defence Force, their cases are treated sympathetically and with discretion. They are discharged administratively unless factors such as assault, coercion, some public display or interference with a minor are involved. When such factors are present, the provisions of Service disciplinary law can be applied and a prosecution can be initiated.

Garth Evans on behalf of the Defence Minister, ‘Questions and Answers Defence Forces’, Senate Official Hansard, No 101, November 30 1983, Parliament of Australia website.<sup>24</sup>

In 1985, in a move that reflected increasing tolerance in society, the ACT government equalised the age of consent for homosexuals and heterosexuals to 16 (previously it had been 18 and 16 respectively); thereby effectively confirming that the ACT Criminal Code did not criminalise homosexuality. This amendment prompted the ADF to re-evaluate its position on the issue. While acknowledging changing community attitudes towards homosexuality, the ADF maintained that it was ‘not a social laboratory but a unique organisation primarily concerned with developing military ethos and standards so vital in combat.’<sup>24</sup>

The ADF’s response was to reaffirm its policy.

**Source 9.34**

The ADF policy on homosexuality is that when a member admits or is proven to be involved in homosexual conduct, consideration is to be given to the termination of that member’s service.

Department of Defence, Defence Instruction 15-3 and Explanatory Notes, 4 November 1985.

## USING HISTORICAL SOURCES AS EVIDENCE 9.4

What do Sources 9.32 and 9.33 reveal about the positions of the government and the ADF regarding homosexuality in the forces? Use evidence from the Sources to support your answer.

### The arguments for and against

The policy remained the status quo until 1991 when the remit of the Australian Human Rights and Equal Opportunities Commission (HREOC) was extended to include discrimination on the basis of sexuality. This enabled two dismissed lesbian servicewomen: one from the Navy and one from the Army, to lodge complaints with HREOC.<sup>26</sup> These actions set in train a protracted debate on the issue. The ban against homosexuals and lesbians centred on the following four justifications:

- a perceived negative impact on morale
- security concerns (homosexuals could potentially be subject to blackmail)
- the perceived need to protect minors
- concern about public health (most notably HIV/AIDS).

These justifications were countered by advocates for change, who argued:

- that when the United States racially integrated their armed forces in the 1940s, the feared negative impact of integration on morale and discipline did not eventuate to the extent anticipated
- concerns about security could be eliminated if there was a policy of acceptance in the ADF
- there was no evidence that minors needed more protection other than through the sexual offences regulations that applied to all serving personnel
- HIV/AIDS were not exclusively homosexual diseases.

There were strongly held opinions within the Labor Government itself. The ALP was divided into two groups: supporters of the ban (who were grouped under the Defence Minister Robert Ray) and opponents of the ban (who were grouped under Attorney-General Michael Duffy). At the time, Australia did not have federal laws prohibiting employment discrimination based on sexual orientation.<sup>27</sup> By invoking Australia's obligations under international anti-discrimination laws – particularly the International Labour Organization Conventions and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) – the issue no longer sat solely within the remit of the ADF. The key sections of the ICCPR were the right to privacy, the right to access the public service and the right to equality/protection before the law.<sup>28</sup>

The *Sydney Morning Herald* reported on the reaction of the Armed Forces Federation and the RSL to the proposed repeal of the ban. In Source 9.35, representatives for these two organisations are suggesting that physical and verbal abuse against homosexuals and disciplinary problems would result.

'We would be disgusted, quite frankly', the executive officer of the Armed Forces Federation, Mr. Patrick Jones, said last night. 'Heterosexuals still find homosexual activity to be repugnant.'

Mr. Jones said there was a 'widely held prejudice that homosexuals tend to advertise their preferences more than heterosexuals. It follows that the homosexuals who are allowed in will agitate the heterosexuals in the services.'

Source 9.35

Amanda Meade, 'Lifting of Gay Ban Disgusting: Forces', *Sydney Morning Herald*, September 19 1992, p.5.

## The outcome

This divisive issue was finally resolved in late 1992, when the ALP Caucus Joint Working Group<sup>29</sup> (a committee of parliamentary members from the same party) reached a split decision (4–2). The issue then moved to Cabinet where, after considerable debate, it was agreed that the ban should be repealed. It became law on 23 November 1992. Prime Minister Paul Keating released the following statement of support.

### Source 9.36

This decision reflects broad support in the Australian community for the removal of employment discrimination of any kind, including discrimination on grounds of sexual preference. The decision brings ADF policy in line with the tolerant attitudes of Australians generally.

Statement by the Prime Minister, the Hon P.J. Keating MP, *Australian Defence Force Policy on Homosexuality*, November 23 1992, PM Transcripts Department of Premier and Cabinet website.<sup>30</sup>

On the same day, *The Age* published an editorial expressing how out of touch the military had been.

### Source 9.37

Federal Cabinet's decision to lift the ban on homosexuals in the Australian Defence Force, overruling a case put by the Defence Minister, Senator Ray, indicates how out of step the military was with evolving community attitudes. Most Australians would accept our obligations under United Nations and international labor conventions that sexual preference should not be grounds for discrimination. In doing so they, like the majority in the Cabinet vote, are not advocating homosexuality but defending fellow humans' basic rights.

The military ... [has] entered the twentieth century, a little later than most Australians.

*The Age* Editorial, *The Military is Now Marching in Step*, *The Age*, November 25 1992, p.13.

## USING HISTORICAL SOURCES AS EVIDENCE 9.5

Examine Sources 9.36 and 9.37. How do these statements reflect Australia's International Convention obligations?

## Competing perspectives

While the national president of the RSL, Alf Garland, believed that homosexuals were 'sexual deviants' with a 'medical problem' who 'should not be treated any differently to drug addicts', the highly respected Sir Edward 'Weary' Dunlop was more realistic and supported the lifting of the ban. The 85-year-old ex-prisoner-of-war said that military officials and politicians who were concerned that there would be a breakdown of discipline were probably 'worrying too much'. 'There have always been homosexuals in the services', he said, 'Don't let us delude ourselves ... it is a mistake if you start labelling too hard'.<sup>31</sup>

In Source 9.38, historian Noah Riseman sums up the events and the debate.

When looking at the official ‘legal’ reasons given to lift the ban, they were always framed around violations of international law. When interviewing Duffy, though, it became clear that invoking international law was really about changing the decision-making process. The ban theoretically rested in the Defence Minister’s jurisdiction. By invoking international law, it now came under multiple portfolios and therefore was a matter for Cabinet. Of course, there was a legitimate international law argument, but for Duffy and others this was a moral issue about ending discrimination.

Source 9.38

Noah Riseman, ‘Our journey – two milestones’, n.d., DEFGLIS, website.<sup>32</sup>

## Conclusion

The removal of this long-standing policy of discrimination against homosexual and lesbian ADF personnel reflected the broader community shift towards principles of anti-discrimination and inclusion (the lifting of the ban on open service did not apply to transgender people until 2010). The dismantling of similar discriminatory policies also occurred around this time in New Zealand, Canada and Israel. This was one of the first times Australia had acted independently of the United States, which maintained a ban on openly gay and lesbian people serving in the military, adopting a ‘don’t ask, don’t tell’ policy in 1993. Since the ban was lifted in 1992, the ADF has not discriminated against homosexuals ... and sexual orientation is not a consideration in posting or career development.<sup>33</sup>

## 9.5 Chapter summary

Here are some dot-points for you to consider and add to:

### Continuity

- Despite ongoing discrimination in society, Indigenous Australians continued to enlist and serve.
- Section 43 of the *Sex Discrimination Act, 1984* (Cth) provided the ADF with an exemption to allow discrimination against women, in order to continue the ban on women being employed in combat units.
- Prior to 1992, there was no change to the ADF policy that banned gay and lesbian service personnel from serving openly.

### Change

- The *Racial Discrimination Act, 1975* (Cth) made it unlawful to act in any way that involves a distinction, exclusion, restriction or preference based on race, colour, descent or national or ethnic origin, including employment and service in the ADF.
- The *Sex Discrimination Act, 1984* (Cth) opened up greater job opportunities for women in the ADF.
- The removal in 1992 from the Defence Act of the last piece of discriminatory policy that had exempted Indigenous men from compulsory national service in the event of war.
- In 1992, Prime Minister Paul Keating announces women can serve in all Army, Navy and Air Force units – except in direct combat units.

## 9.6 End-of-chapter activities

### Consolidating your understanding

Complete the following questions to help revise the key events, ideas, perspectives and experiences of the evolving nature of enlistment and service in the military forces.

### Evaluating historical significance

- Using Sources 9.8–9.14 to formulate your response, discuss why Indigenous people enlisted in the armed services.
- Drawing on Section 9.3, identify the changes in occupations for women in Australia's armed forces since the 1950s.

### Constructing an argument: Essay writing

- Analyse the extent to which the participation of women in the armed forces has increased since 1950. Use evidence to support your response.
- Evaluate the ways in which the ADF has evolved to become more inclusive. Use evidence to support your response.

### Extension reading

#### The ways in which Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders served

Cadzow and Jebb eds, *Our Mob Served - Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander histories of war and defending Australia*, Aboriginal Studies Press, Canberra, 2019.

Jordens A, 'An Administrative Nightmare: Aboriginal Conscription 1965 -72', <http://press-files.anu.edu.au/downloads/press/p72111/pdf/article077.pdf>.

Riseman N and Trembath R, *Defending Country: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Military Service since 1945*, UQP, Queensland, 2016.

The AWM has numerous online articles on Indigenous service in the Australian Defence Force

#### The participation of women in the armed services

Bomford, J, *Soldiers Of The Queen In The Australian Army*, Oxford University Press, South Melbourne, 2001.

Blair, W, *The Sapphires* [film], Goalpost Pictures, 2012

Cadzow and Jebb eds, *Our Mob Served - Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander histories of war and defending Australia* Aboriginal Studies Press, Canberra, 2019.

Heather Radi, 'Street, Lady Jessie Mary (1889–1970)', Australian Dictionary of Biography, National Centre of Biography, Australian National University, <https://adb.anu.edu.au/biography/street-lady-jessie-mary-11789/text21089>, published online 2002.

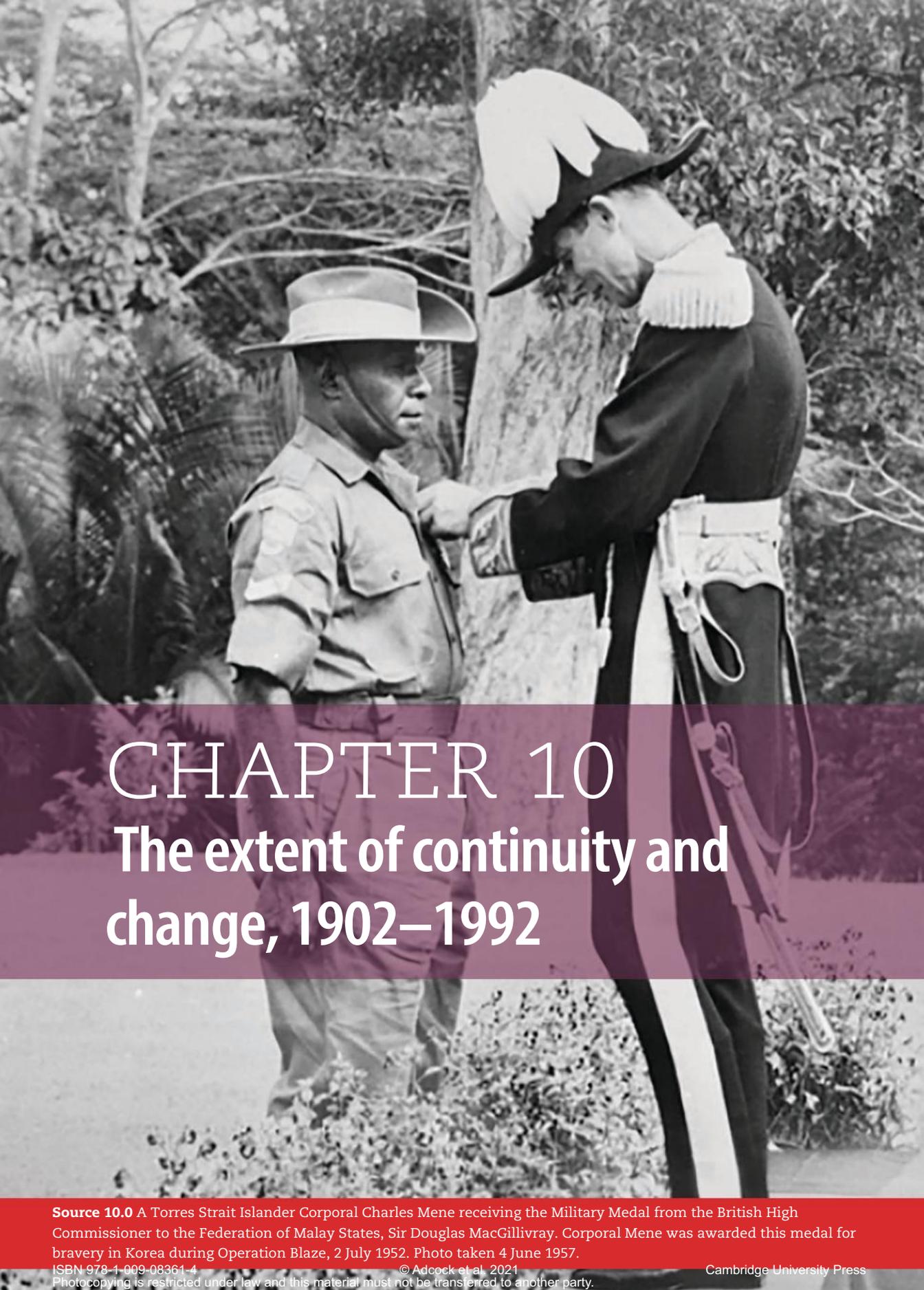
Ryebuck Media Pty. Ltd., *Australian Women at War, DVA*, 2008 (for primary sources and activities).

The AWM and each of the armed forces have online articles about women's service in the Australian Defence Force

#### The question of open service

Riseman N and Robinson S, *Pride in Defence: the Australian Military and LGBTI Service since 1945* MUP, Melbourne, 2020

Riseman N, Robinson S, Willett G, *Serving in Silence? Australia's LGBT Servicemen and Women*, NewSouth Publishing, Sydney, 2018.



# CHAPTER 10

## The extent of continuity and change, 1902–1992

**Source 10.0** A Torres Strait Islander Corporal Charles Mene receiving the Military Medal from the British High Commissioner to the Federation of Malay States, Sir Douglas MacGillivray. Corporal Mene was awarded this medal for bravery in Korea during Operation Blaze, 2 July 1952. Photo taken 4 June 1957.

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## 10.1 Introduction

### INQUIRY QUESTION

Over the period of our study (1909–92), what have been the significant changes that have taken place in the nature of our military involvement, and what things have remained constant?

In looking at continuity and change in Australian military involvement in the twentieth century, there are five interrelated areas of study that should be considered:

1. Australia is a relatively large country in area, but small in population. We have not been involved in any major conflict alone. Who have been our allies over this period, how and why have these alliances changed and what have been the consequences of this?
2. What have been the major conflicts and regions of conflict in which we have become involved, and has this changed over time?
3. To what extent have these engagements been carried out by professional soldiers and to what extent has conscription in some form been involved? What opposition has developed towards conscription?
4. How has the diversity of Australian society in terms of gender, sexual preference and race played out in the military forces?
5. What generalisations can we make about how the military have carried out their tasks, and how warfare itself has changed during this time?

## 10.2 Change and continuity

### Changing alliances

This has been one of the most significant changes in our military involvement in the twentieth century and continues to influence us today. During World War I and in the first years of World War II, we considered ourselves as part of the British Empire and were quick to join Britain in conflicts in which they were involved and in defending their role as an imperial power.

This attitude changed dramatically midway through World War II. Australia felt directly threatened by Japanese expansion into Southeast Asia, Japan's invasion of New Guinea and its bombing of Darwin and other Australian coastal cities. It was then that we turned towards the United States. The United States became involved in World War II after the Japanese bombing of its naval base in Hawaii. The United States also faced the Pacific Ocean and shared with Australia a common interest in defeating the Japanese.

Although during the Cold War the Japanese themselves became allies, we continued to support US engagement in Cold War conflicts in Korea and Vietnam, using the same rationale of stopping potential 'communist' and specifically Chinese communist expansion.

Although the formal treaty of SEATO no longer applies our continuing relationship with the United States in more recent times has led us to support them in conflicts in Iraq and Afghanistan.

### Changing regions of conflict

Our changing alliances have also been related to how and where we have become involved militarily. In the early part of the twentieth century, Australians considered themselves an integral

part of the British Empire. World War I broke out in the middle of an Australian election campaign and both the Government and the Opposition promised they would support sending troops to fight in Europe. With Turkey entering the war on Germany's side, we also became involved in the Middle East in the Gallipoli campaign and in Palestine.

It was a similar situation with the outbreak of war in 1939. On 3 September, just two days after Britain had declared war, Prime Minister Robert Menzies announced on radio:

Fellow Australians, it is my melancholy duty to inform you officially that, in consequence of the persistence of Germany in her invasion of Poland, Great Britain has declared war upon her, and that, as a result, Australia is also at war.

Source 10.1

'Prime Minister Robert G. Menzies: wartime broadcast', September 3 1939, Australian War Memorial website<sup>1</sup>



↑ Source 10.2 Australian Prime Minister Robert Menzies on 3 September 1939, broadcasting to the nation the news of the outbreak of World War II

This war also expanded – first to conflicts in North Africa and the Middle East and then (after the 1942 fall of Singapore to the Japanese) to conflicts in New Guinea and all of East Asia.

In the 40 years following the end of World War II, our primary involvement has been in East Asia (in Korea) and in Southeast Asia (in Vietnam). In both these situations, we were supporting the United States. We were also involved in the Malayan Emergency and the Indonesian

Confrontation, mainly in cooperation with the British with the aim of supporting the integrity of the new State of Malaysia. Our more recent involvement in East Timor's struggle with Indonesia had a similar goal of supporting independence.

## The conscription debates

The question of whether an army should be made up of volunteers or involve conscripting men to fight has always been a contentious one. The *Constitution* allows the Federal Government to conscript an army if the country is attacked directly. At Federation, the Constitution gave the Commonwealth Parliament the power to make laws with respect to 'the naval and military defence of the Commonwealth and several States'. In the following ten years, a series of Defence Acts of the Commonwealth Parliament made it possible to conscript males for home defence but not for overseas service. In October 1916, the Prime Minister Billy Hughes tried to get public support for overseas conscription by holding a 'referendum' (but really a plebiscite) which was lost by a slim margin. He tried again in December 1917 but this was defeated by a larger margin.

After the fall of Singapore in 1942, when Australia itself was also directly threatened, the Curtin Labor Government brought in an Act on 19 February 1943 that permitted it to compulsorily enlist men to join the Army in the Citizen Military Forces (CMF), to serve in the defence of the mainland, and non-Australian territories associated with the defence of Australia in the South-west Pacific Area, including New Guinea. At the time of the wars in Korea and Vietnam, there were forms of compulsory military training. In the Korean War, men were encouraged to 'volunteer' to serve overseas. In the case of Vietnam, however, the expectation was that men who were eligible for National Service, and who had not opted for service in the Citizen Military Forces, would be liable to serve overseas within units of the regular Army.

## Recognising diversity

Indigenous men have taken part in Colonial and Australian armed forces in every conflict since the Boer War in South Africa (1899–1901), despite official restrictions on their enlistment. As well as taking up the challenges of warfare, enlistment provided them with security and a 'real' job instead of facing all the disadvantages at home. However, on their return to civilian society, the Army service that made others 'heroes' gave them no advantages. Indigenous men who had served continued to have to live in civilian life with all the discrimination faced by other Indigenous men and women. In times of emergency, such as that following the Japanese advance, restrictions were temporarily eased, but it was not until the passing of the *Racial Discrimination Act, 1975* (Cth) that discrimination 'including employment and service in the Australian Defence Forces' on the basis of race was forbidden.

During all the wars in this period, women have served as nurses but full access to the defence force has been a slow process. The initial stage to involve women was taken when the Australian Women's Army Service was mobilised between 1941 and 1947 to release service men for frontline duties. The women's auxiliary services attached to the Army, Navy and Air Force employed women as telegraphists, drivers and clerical staff. The women's auxiliary services attached to the Air Force employed women as aircraft ground staff, wireless telegraphists, and signals operators.

The second stage occurred during the early 1950s. Women were given greater military responsibilities, but they worked in separate units from the men.

The third, and final, stage occurred in the mid-1980s when there was an effort to fully incorporate women into the regular forces. The only limitation they faced was being excluded from direct combat units.

Despite there always being LGBTQIA+ military personnel in the Australian Defence Forces, they were officially prohibited from serving until November 1992, when this ban was removed.

## The changing nature of warfare

The greatest changes over the period studied can be seen in the nature of warfare and the technology employed. The changes are evident in the shift from trench warfare in World War I to aerial bombing and the use of the atomic bomb in World War II, and to guerrilla warfare in the last 40 years of this period. At the same time, the technology of warfare has become far more complex. This has had two consequences:

1. Since the soldier has to be a highly trained professional, raising a civilian militia has become less effective and more unlikely.
2. Intellectual and emotional abilities have become more important than physical attributes, thus, opening the way for women to serve at all levels.

### 10.3 End-of-chapter activities

#### Consolidating your understanding

1. What was the turning point at which our reliance on allies turned towards the United States from Britain? What were the reasons for this?
2. What were the three stages through which women were gradually able to become full members of the Australian Defence Forces?
3. When was discrimination against Indigenous men and women finally made illegal?
4. The aim of the following exercise is to bring together most of the threads in the chapter and will help consolidate your understanding in order to write an essay. In an essay, or exam, a question with the command word 'Evaluate' means to list a range of factors and put them into an order of importance. An activity like the following can help you to organise your ideas for such a question.

Change in one area – in this case military involvement – is influenced by changes in other areas such as facing different threats, having different loyalties, changes in technology, and changes in social values. You are to evaluate the influence of each of these in the changes described in this chapter.

Use the following table to summarise changes that have taken place between 1909 and 1992. For the first three columns, focus on the following conflicts:

- 1910s: World War I
- 1940s: World War II
- 1970s: Vietnam War
- 1990s: any conflict from this period

	1910s	1940s	1970s	1990s
Main areas of conflicts				
Main alliance				
Type of warfare				
Discrimination				
Qualities required of a soldier				

## Constructing an argument

### Essay writing

To what extent did Australia's military involvement change in the period 1909–1992? In your answer consider the nature of the conflicts, the changing nature of warfare, changing alliances, and changing social values.

### Extension reading

Most of the issues in this chapter have been covered in previous reading lists. However, in respect to Torres Strait Islander Corporal Charles Mene (who was depicted in Source 10.0), you can learn more about him at the Australian War Memorial website: <https://cambridge.edu.au/redirect/9684>

# End Notes

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