



CENTURY OF SERVICE



# Patriotism

Stories from the Australian home front during the Second World War





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Napier Waller, Hall of Memory: west window (1950, stained glass. AWM ART90410.002 [detail])

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*Ancestry: Stories of multicultural Anzacs* (2015)  
*Resource: Stories of Australian innovation in wartime* (2016)  
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ART90410.002 (detail)

In the Hall of Memory at the Australian War Memorial in Canberra there are 15 stained-glass windows. Each shows a figure dressed in military uniform, and under each figure is a word which describes a quality displayed by Australians during wartime.

One window features an infantryman and the stars of the Southern Cross. He represents the Australian men, women and children who displayed exceptional dedication and perseverance on the home front during the Second World War.

This window bears the word *Patriotism*.



# Patriotism

Stories from the Australian home front during the Second World War

Written by Natalie Lynch and Nathan Rogers



1939

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## Note to the reader:

Most of these stories take place during wartime. You may feel sad after reading some of them. Teachers may wish to be sensitive to those students who have personal experience with conflict, family members who are veterans, or parents serving overseas in war zones.

Readers of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander descent should be aware that this book contains images of deceased Indigenous peoples.

**Women and children waving farewell to service personnel leaving Melbourne, 15 December 1939.**

Edward Lefevre Cranstone, AWM 000304/01





# Introduction

For Australians the Second World War began on the far side of the world. In its early years, fighting took place mostly in Europe and around the Mediterranean. Only after Japan entered the war in December 1941 did fighting come to the Asia-Pacific region. By the time Japan surrendered in August 1945, Australia was a very different country from the one that had gone to war in support of Britain in 1939.

Thousands of women served in the armed forces in wider-ranging roles than nursing, to which they had traditionally been restricted. Many others undertook paid work in urban and rural industries, often while continuing to care for their homes and families. Children participated in fundraising events, knitted, and collected items for recycling.

Prime Minister John Curtin called Japan's entry into the war Australia's "darkest hour". As Japanese forces moved southwards in early 1942 the Government demanded that all Australians, both military personnel and civilians, work for the war effort. Air raid precautions took on new urgency, blackout provisions were enforced, trenches were dug, and sandbags stacked around city buildings. When Japanese aircraft bombed Darwin in February 1942, invasion seemed imminent. A Japanese midget submarine attack on Sydney Harbour and the shelling of Sydney and Newcastle were further reminders that the war was close to home.

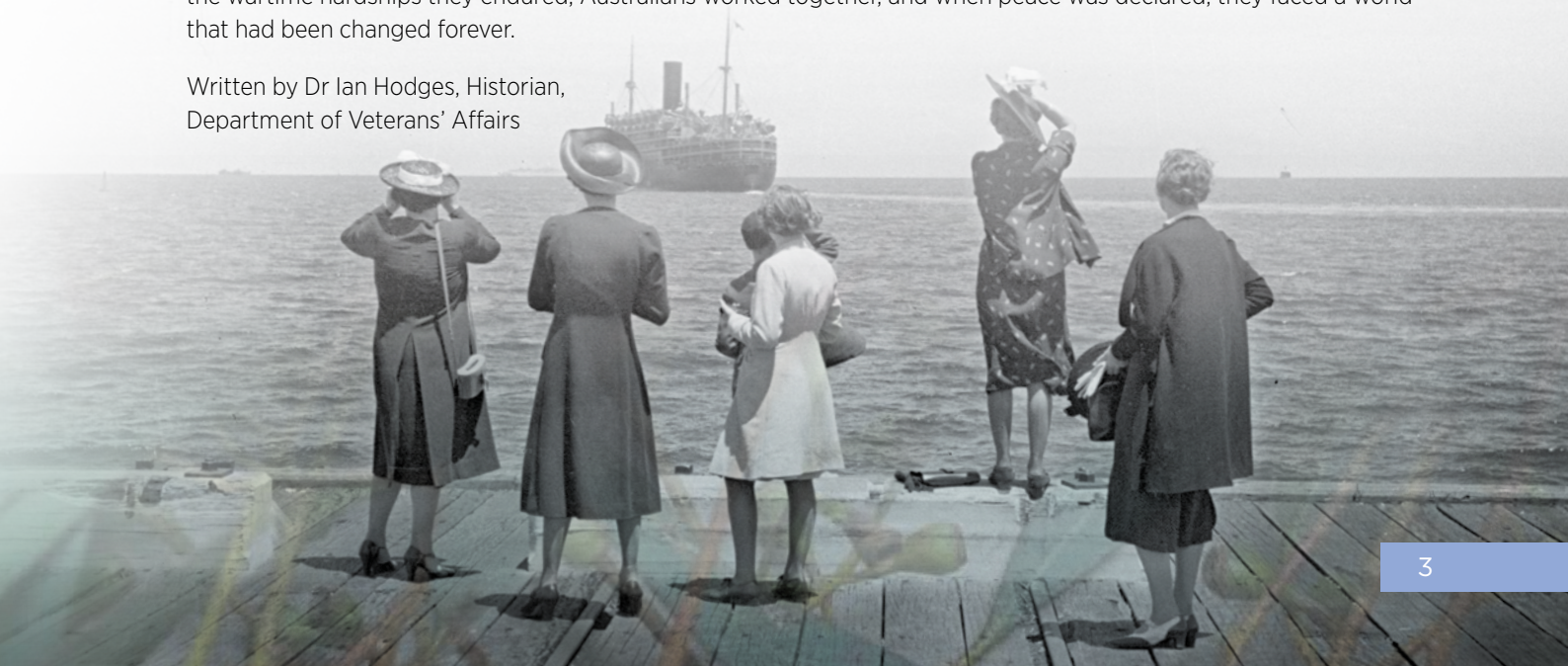
The Government urged sacrifice, but panic buying led to the introduction of **rationing** in 1942. Under the **austerity** program, Australians were expected to live frugally. Newspapers and magazines printed tips and recipes to help people adapt. The scarcity of fresh food drove many people to turn their lawns into vegetable gardens.

As the war progressed, the United States eclipsed Britain as Australia's key ally. From 1942, tens of thousands of United States troops began arriving in Australia, which was now a major base for Allied operations in the south-west Pacific. Warmly welcomed at first, the Americans soon became envied by Australian servicemen who resented their higher pay, superior amenities and better uniforms. But many women found the Americans charming and well mannered, and by early 1945 some 1,500 Australian war brides had sailed for the United States.

Germany's **surrender** in May 1945 signalled the end of the war in Europe, but fighting continued in the Pacific until Japan's surrender on 15 August 1945. People poured into the streets in celebration. Australia's focus now shifted to life after the war.

In this book you will find stories of some Australians who served on the home front during the Second World War. Each demonstrates admirable qualities, including dedication, perseverance, and sacrifice. Florence McKenzie was determined that women serve in the Royal Australian Navy for the first time; Joyce Linnane decoded secret messages which helped to protect lives; and John Curtin led the nation during a time of immense fear and uncertainty. Despite the wartime hardships they endured, Australians worked together, and when peace was declared, they faced a world that had been changed forever.

Written by Dr Ian Hodges, Historian,  
Department of Veterans' Affairs





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# Leading a nation: Prime Minister John Curtin

**On 8 December 1941, Prime Minister John Curtin woke to the news that Japan had attacked the United States and war had begun in the Pacific. Suddenly, a conflict that had seemed so far away had come much closer to home. John knew that he would need to lead Australia through a turbulent time in its history.**

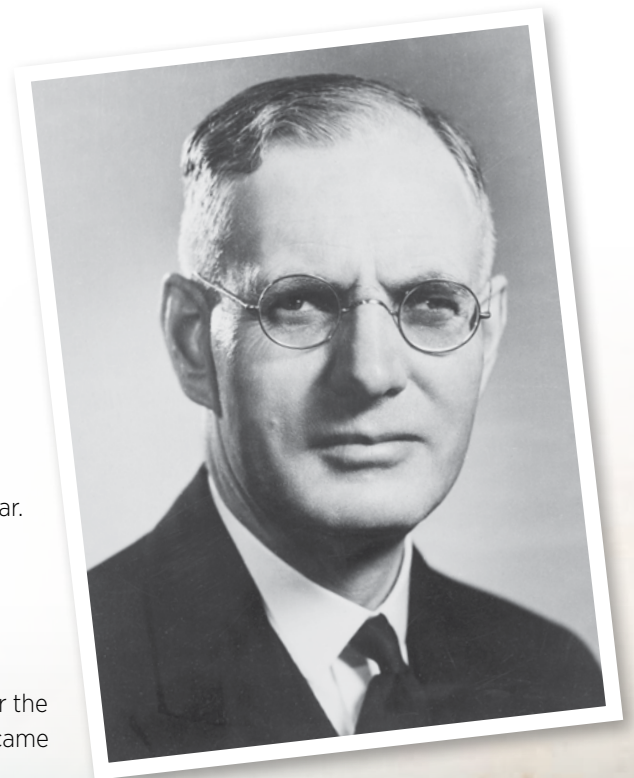
Born in 1885 in Creswick, Victoria, John was the eldest of four children. His father worked as a police officer until illness forced him to retire. The family then moved around Victoria as his father looked for other work, and John and his siblings increasingly had to take on the role of supporting the family. This led to John leaving school at 13 years of age. He held a number of temporary jobs before becoming a **clerk** in a manufacturing company.

A keen cricketer and Australian Rules footballer, John played for Brunswick football club between 1905 and 1909, and continued to support the club throughout his life. Around this time, John became politically active. He joined what became the Victorian Labor Party, published articles in various **socialist** newspapers and was involved in the union movement wherever he lived. John made his first unsuccessful attempt to win a seat in the Victorian Parliament in 1914.

A **pacifist** during the First World War, John attended regular protests against **conscription** and was arrested for ignoring a government order for eligible men to report to a military camp. After his release, he moved to Perth to be an editor for *The Westralian Worker*. John married Elsie Needham in 1917 and they had two children, also named Elsie and John. He remained a newspaper editor until he won the federal seat of Fremantle for the Australian Labor Party in the 1928 election.

Due to the burden of the **Great Depression**, the government was voted out at the next election and John lost his seat in Parliament. He waited for the next opportunity while he worked at home and wrote articles for a number of newspapers. John regained his seat in the 1934 election, and as the leader of the Australian Labor Party, became the **Leader of the Opposition** in Parliament the following year.

On 3 September 1939 Australian Prime Minister Robert Menzies declared war on Germany, with full support from his own party and the Opposition. But as the war progressed, the Parliament became increasingly critical of Menzies' leadership. He resigned, and with the government unable to pass laws in Parliament, the way was paved for the Opposition to become the governing party. In October 1941, John became Australia's 14th Prime Minister.



**Prime Minister John Curtin, 1941.**

AWM 003870

**What personal qualities do you think are important for the leader of a nation?**





After Japan entered the war, many in Australia thought the country was directly under threat. The country had not been prepared for war and it lacked the resources and equipment to fight closer to home. With a large number of Australian forces serving overseas, John turned towards the United States for support on the home front. He addressed the nation:

*Without any inhibitions of any kind I make it quite clear that Australia looks to America, free from any pangs as to our traditional links or kinship with the United Kingdom.<sup>1</sup>*



**Brunswick Football Club, 1905. John is standing in front of the doorway, wearing a cloth cap.**

Image courtesy of the John Curtin Prime Ministerial Library, JCPML00376/11

**Curtin family, 1922.**

Image courtesy of the John Curtin Prime Ministerial Library, JCPML00376/51





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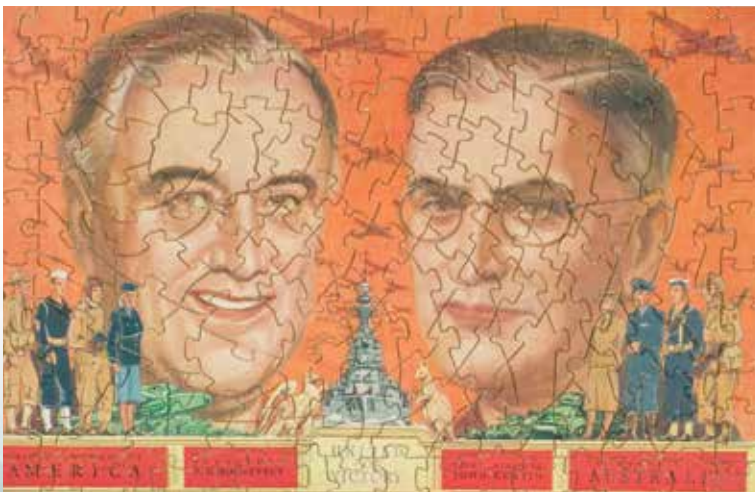
1941



John with General Douglas MacArthur, 1942.

AWM 042774

With the defeat of British forces in Singapore by the Japanese on 15 February 1942, a large number of Australians were captured. It seemed little could prevent Japan from attacking Australia, and four days later the Japanese bombed Darwin and its harbour. John continued to seek assistance from the United States and insisted that Australian soldiers return from overseas to defend Australia. He defied the British Prime Minister Winston Churchill's plans for the 7th Australian Division, rerouting them from Burma to Australia. The situation deeply affected John. He slept very little and spent late nights walking around Canberra to help clear his mind. John grappled with his decisions daily and questioned if he was doing the right thing for Australia. This **anxiety** remained with him throughout the war.



Help arrived from America when United States forces, led by General Douglas MacArthur, came to Australia in March 1942. The same month, many of the Australian soldiers who had fought overseas returned home safely. However, the threat from Japan continued, with a submarine attack in Sydney, on the night of 31 May/1 June, and further air raids on northern Australia.

**Children's jigsaw puzzle titled "United for Victory", featuring John and United States President Franklin Roosevelt. These puzzles were easily produced and explained Australia's wartime efforts.**

John Sands Pty Ltd product, AWM REL38547.001





## Americans in Australia

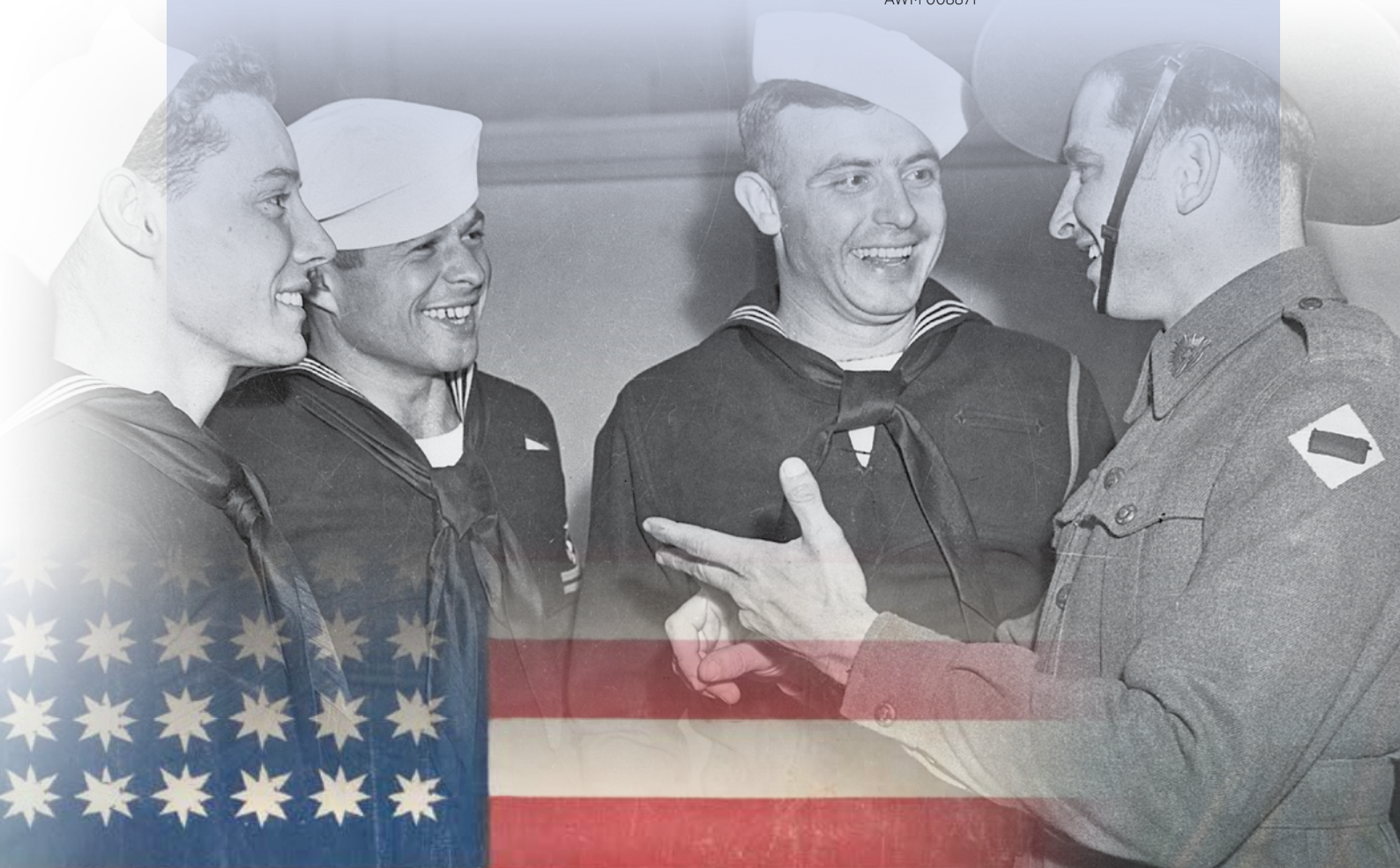
During the Second World War, American soldiers, sailors and airmen served in Australia. They brought with them new trends in fashion, food and movies, which all became popular with Australians. Welcome dances were held, and many Australian women met and married men from the United States. The higher pay and rations received by the Americans was a source of tension between them and their Australian allies, but they generally worked well together.

**What challenges might occur with so many Americans in Australia?**

Roy Hodgkinson, *Battin' the breeze*, (1942, drawing, 68.2 x 52.6 cm, AWM ART21346)

American sailors talking to an Australian soldier in Brisbane, 1941.

AWM 008871



in of "ANZAC DAY"  
MELBOURNE  
AUSCRAIA - April 25, 1945  
Linn  
USA



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John Curtin's government introduced wartime **regulations** that affected everyday life. Australians were expected to make sacrifices and to contribute as much as they could to the war effort. Austerity and rationing became a reality and manufacturing weapons, ammunition and aircraft replaced much of ordinary factory production. John also oversaw the introduction of conscription, which went against his own personal beliefs. Most Australians accepted these changes to their daily lives as they felt they needed to do all they could for the defence of Australia. The leadership provided by John and his government was rewarded with re-election by the Australian people in 1943.

**Why might John have introduced conscription, despite his personal beliefs?**



Apron made from a dyed chaff bag with straps made from a red curtain.

AWM REL15581

## Rationing

Australia needed to use a large number of resources to make weapons, vehicles and equipment for the war effort. To increase the available resources, rationing was introduced in Australia. This was a way to limit the amount of food, clothing and petrol a person could obtain so that supplies in the country would not run out. Australians were issued with a set number of ration cards that needed to be presented to shopkeepers when buying an item.

**What other ways might Australians obtain food and clothing during the Second World War?**

Studebaker car fitted with a gas converter on the back to save petrol.

AWM REL28192



## Activity

### Can you cook "Cabbage au gratin"?

This is one example of a recipe used in Australia during the Second World War. At this time, Australians used the British imperial system of measurement. Please ask a teacher or trusted adult for help with this task.

### Ingredients:

1 medium-sized cabbage  
1 ounce flour with milk to blend  
1 cup boiling water  
3 ounces grated cheese  
3 ounces bread crumbs  
salt to flavour

### Method:

Wash cabbage, chop coarsely and cook in boiling water 10-15 minutes. Drain well and save liquid to make white sauce with flour blended with a little milk. Flavour with salt and add cheese, pour over cabbage in fireproof dish. Sprinkle with brown breadcrumbs and grated cheese and bake in a quick oven for 15 minutes.

Ration cards from around 1944.

AWM 042770

AWM RC09866





By 1944, the war had begun to turn in favour of the **Allies** and the threat to Australia lessened. John began to focus his attention on post-war Australia and made frequent trips to Britain and the United States to strengthen Australia's diplomatic relationships. He continued to urge Australians to do everything they could to help win the war. However, after years of stress and anxiety caused by leading a nation at war, John's health deteriorated. In late 1944, he suffered a heart attack and spent two months in hospital. He returned as Prime Minister but became increasingly unable to handle the workload.

On 5 July 1945, with the end of the war just over a month away, John died peacefully in his sleep in Canberra. After a memorial service at Parliament House, he was buried in Perth, where he had served as a Member of Parliament. The inscription on his grave summed up his wartime leadership:

*His country was his pride, his brother man his cause.<sup>2</sup>*

**Pallbearers carry John's casket to his grave at Karrakatta Cemetery in Perth. John's children are in attendance, along with serving Prime Minister Frank Forde and Robert Menzies.**

*The West Australian, AWM P02018.421*





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## Showing initiative: Florence McKenzie

**In April 1941, fourteen women dressed in green and gold service uniforms travelled from their small office in Sydney to a naval wireless transmitting station in Canberra. The RAN had heard about their talent with Morse code and was eager to use their skills for the war effort on the home front. This was a proud moment for these women, one that would not have been possible without their teacher, Mrs Mac.**

Florence McKenzie, known as “Mrs Mac” to her students, was born in Melbourne on 28 September 1890. She was the second child of English-born parents James and Marie. After the early death of her father, her mother remarried and moved the family to Sydney. There Florence was educated and developed an interest in electricity. In 1915 Florence studied science at university, but left after two years as she did not have enough money to continue.

Keen to pursue her interests, Florence opened a radio sales and repair shop in 1922. This allowed her to study by night at Sydney Technical College. She was the first Australian woman to receive a diploma in electrical engineering – and was still the only one even twenty years later. Florence also became Australia's first female certified radio **telegraphist**, the first woman to hold an amateur wireless licence, and the first female member of the Wireless Institute of Australia. In 1924, Florence married fellow electrical engineer Cecil McKenzie.



This badge was worn by members of the Women's Emergency Signalling Corps (WESC). Underneath the wings are crossed blue and white signal flags.

AWM REL25303.002

**Why might wings have been used as a symbol of the WESC?**

Florence, 1939.

AWM PO1262.001







Members of the WESC instructing Australian service personnel in Morse code, 1944.

Gordon Herbert Short, AWM 017675

In 1934, Florence founded the Australian branch of the Electrical Association for Women (EAW). Two years later, she closed her shop to devote her time to the association. Florence continued to establish herself as a skilled electrical engineer, while also demonstrating cooking with electricity and electrical safety at the EAW. In 1938 she joined the Australian Women's Flying Club and taught female pilots Morse code.



## Activity

As a telegraphist, Florence had a strong understanding of Morse code. This was a vital communication system during the Second World War. By **encoding** letters and numbers in sequences of dots and dashes, messages could be sent through audio and visual signals.



**Why would Morse code messages be essential in wartime?**

**Write your own messages using the dots and dashes in the Morse code alphabet below.**

A	● —	J	● — — —	S	● ● ●	1	● — — — —
B	— ● ● ●	K	— ● —	T	—	2	● ● — — —
C	— ● — ●	L	● — ● ●	U	● ● —	3	● ● ● — —
D	— ● ●	M	— —	V	● ● ● —	4	● ● ● ● —
E	●	N	— ●	W	● — —	5	● ● ● ● ●
F	● ● — ●	O	— — —	X	— ● ● —	6	— ● ● ● ●
G	— — ●	P	● — — ●	Y	— ● — —	7	— — ● ● ●
H	● ● ● ●	Q	— — ● —	Z	— — ● ●	8	— — — ● ●
I	● ●	R	● — ●			9	— — — — ●
						0	— — — — —

AWM REL/6708.001



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**Florence (left) with fellow members of the WESC Pat McInnes and Esme Kura Murrell. Florence designed their uniforms herself.**

AWM P02583.002

Before the outbreak of the Second World War, Florence formed the WESC to teach women Morse code and signalling in a small room in central Sydney. By the time war had broken out six months later, she had trained nearly 1,000 women. Well aware that women could competently perform the duties of a telegraphist, she repeatedly wrote to both the Royal Australian Air Force (RAAF) and the RAN, asking them to allow women to serve.

Florence recalled the moment when she realised the potential of the WESC to assist with the war effort directly:

*Early in the war, one young would-be pilot tried to enlist but was refused because he didn't know Morse code ... By sheer coincidence he walked past [the WESC on Clarence Street] and heard the sounds of Morse signalling.*

*He walked up to me and said, "Will you teach me Morse code?" I just heaved a big sigh because I saw a whole world opening up in front of me. Then I knew what we could do. We could train girls to train the men. It was wonderful, because I'd thought we could only do things like relieving [replacing staff] in the post office.<sup>1</sup>*

All through the Second World War, Florence and the WESC trained men and women in the use of Morse code. Florence's efforts on the home front left a lasting effect on her pupils. Some former students who joined the Australian armed forces later sent her souvenirs to show their gratitude. Florence received an Italian flag captured by Australians at Tobruk, and another flag captured by the Australian Sixth Division, fighting in Greece. She also received a piece of a **Zero** fighter that was shot down during an air raid on Darwin. She displayed these mementos at her school in Sydney.





## Did you know?

The Women's Royal Australian Naval Service (WRANS) was formed in April 1941 as a result of a shortage of telegraphists in the RAN. At the end of the Second World War it was **disbanded**, but **manpower** shortages in the RAN led to the service being re-established in 1951, and it was made a permanent part of the RAN in 1959. WRANS personnel were gradually absorbed into the RAN during the early 1980s and eventually the service was disbanded. Women were first allowed to serve on ships in 1983. In 1985, women became fully integrated into the RAN.

Henry Hanke, *Two WRANS (Third Officer Joan Cowie and Telegraphist Walton)*, (1943, oil on canvas, 123.5 x 107.5 cm, AWM ART23956)



Florence continued to pressure the RAAF and the RAN to admit her female students as telegraphists. After numerous attempts, Florence's persistence paid off when the RAN accepted 14 members of the WESC in April 1941. The war had drained the navy of its manpower and it was hoped that women could fill the gap left by the men. These women became the first members of the WRANS. By the end of the war, over 2,500 women had served in the WRANS as telegraphists, cooks, clerks, drivers, mechanics and education officers. Though Florence did not serve in the WRANS, she is remembered as a leading force in its creation.

After the war, Florence was awarded the **Order of the British Empire** for her services to the WESC. Until it closed in 1955, her school continued to train commercial pilots and members of the **merchant navy**. Florence always ran her school as a volunteer and refused to accept any money for the training she provided.

Florence spent her retirement reading, gardening and making jam, as well as keeping in touch with many of her former students. When she died in 1982, serving WRANS personnel formed a guard of honour at her funeral.



Badge belonging to a WRANS member.

AWM REL35041

Members of the WRANS marching in Canberra, 1941.

AWM 009222





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# Protecting in plain sight: Lieutenant Frank Hinder

**For years Frank Hinder refined his craft as an artist, seeking to capture the attention of those who saw his work. However, his job during the Second World War required his art to be undetectable.**

Henry Francis Critchley "Frank" Hinder was born on 26 June 1906 in Sydney. He was the fourth child of Henry and Enid. As a boy, Frank developed an interest in art and drew pictures of ships and soldiers bound for service in the First World War. He was educated in Sydney before undertaking art classes at the Royal Art Society of New South Wales in 1924. Frank then spent a short time travelling around Europe before enrolling at East Sydney Technical College to qualify as a commercial artist.

Seeking to improve his skills, in 1927 Frank travelled to the United States and spent time at art schools in Chicago and New York. He met fellow artist Margel Ina Harris and they married in 1930. Frank spent some years teaching design and drawing in Boston, but returned home to Australia in 1934 because of the Great Depression. In 1937, with the help of his wife, he opened his first solo exhibition in Sydney.

After the war began, Frank joined the Sydney **Camouflage** Group. This was a group of artists, photographers, architects and engineers who were concerned that Australia's camouflage methods were in need of improvement. They undertook experiments in techniques of disguise with the help of members of the armed forces. Through this work, Frank contributed to Professor William Dakin's book *The Art of Camouflage* which promoted techniques in effective camouflage. By 1941, Frank had joined the military as a lieutenant and was sent to the Department of Home Security as a Camoufleur (a title later changed to Camouflage Officer) and worked for Dakin in the Directorate of Camouflage.



Through experimentation, Frank created a number of camouflaged objects. The first was the Hinder Spider, which was a type of **mobile** camouflage netting used to conceal objects from the air. The Hinder Spider was later used by Australians serving in the Middle East. Frank also designed **dummy** aircraft made out of hessian, timber and wire. These fake planes could be constructed quickly and looked convincing when they were observed from the sky.

**Frank working on a model tree dome for an experiment with the Directorate of Camouflage, April 1943.**

Frank Hinder, AWM P06133,029





## Did you know?

Camouflage techniques were used in conflicts before the Second World War. However, with the advances in aerial photography, the work of Camouflage Officers became even more important to conceal objects that were important for military or civilian uses.

**Consider the purpose of camouflage: why might the work of Camouflage Officers be important for the war effort?**

**How might it protect civilians and fighting forces?**

Frank's shoulder slide, worn during the Second World War. The badge depicts a tiger hiding behind a palm leaf.

AWM REL/18134



Frank also designed camouflage for military storage tanks in Darwin that used netting with drab-coloured cloth and other materials. Unfortunately these designs were never used, as the first enemy air raid happened before the camouflage could be installed. Frank compared his experiments in the Directorate of Camouflage to his peacetime work as an artist:

*My work was connected with light, colour, tone, shadows, optical effects and illusions and so on – all for a very different purpose but never the less related to problems which concern the artist.<sup>1</sup>*

Frank spent the next couple of years travelling around major towns in Australia and New Guinea to test different designs of camouflage. With the help of Margel, Frank tested the different types of colouring on models of guns, ships and planes to see how well they blended in with their surroundings.

**A model of a dummy aeroplane showing the effect of camouflage from the air, 1943.**

**Why do you think dummy aircraft were built?  
How might they protect real aeroplanes?**

Frank Hinder, AWM P06133.030



**Set of camouflage paint samples from around 1943. These became the standard colours for Australian military camouflage.**

AWM REL/16500





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During the Second World War, making camouflage netting was an activity that was easily done on the home front. Newspapers and magazines published detailed instructions for net making. Schools and organisations came together to create a vast amount of nets for use overseas.

How might school children feel about making these nets?

What are some of the benefits that might come from people working together to make these nets?



Pupils in Melbourne making camouflage nets in the school playground, 1942.

*The Herald*, AWM 136304



Frank Hinder, *Bomber crash*, (1949, egg tempera, oil and gesso on hardboard, 59.5 x 49.1 cm, AWM ART26924)

In 1941, while on a **reconnaissance** mission in New Guinea, the plane Frank was travelling in crashed on take-off. Affected by this experience, Frank began painting *Bomber crash* and completed it in 1949.

What emotions may Frank have felt after surviving the crash?

Can you see any of these emotions represented in the painting?

Frank (left) with another Camouflage Officer testing a helmet with a papier-mâché cover.

G.C Purcell, AWM P06133.008







## Activity



Frank Hinder, AWM P06133.038-41

These are examples of Frank's camouflage techniques applied to a model of a naval gun. Camouflage Officers like Frank tried to follow four principles for creating camouflage:

1. Tone and colour must resemble the background
2. Limit or erase shadows
3. Disrupt the shape of the object
4. Attempt to make the top of the camouflaged object appear darker than the bottom  
(This is known as countershading and is an idea copied from animals in the wild).

**Try it out yourself; see if you can camouflage objects within their surroundings.**

By late 1943, Frank had left the army and after a period in the RAAF, he left the military entirely in late 1944. He resumed his civilian art career as a teacher, and won several art prizes. Frank eventually served as a trustee of the Art Gallery of New South Wales and was awarded the Medal of the **Order of Australia** (OAM) in 1979. He died in 1992.

Today, Frank is remembered as a pioneer of Australian **abstract art**. However, his wartime contributions were also significant, helping to protect those serving overseas and on the home front in Australia.



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## Life on the land: Margaret Williams

**Margaret Williams was motivated to serve after her brother George was sent a white feather, a symbol of cowardice, in the mail. George had been unable to serve in the Second World War as he was deemed medically unfit because of his asthma. This incident upset Margaret, and she promised George that when she joined a service, she would be doing it for him as well.**

Margaret "Peggy" Williams was born in Sydney on 31 May 1925. She was one of four children, the daughter of Margaret and Walter Feast. Peggy's mother had travelled to Australia as a war bride from London after the First World War. Peggy's father was her mother's second husband, and he had also served in the First World War. Peggy grew up in Sydney and attended the Holy Innocence School. She did not enjoy school and left at the age of 14. Peggy started working at the Peak Freans biscuit factory. After the outbreak of the Second World War in 1939, the factory began to make biscuits to send to the troops serving overseas.

On the night of 31 May 1942, three Japanese midget submarines attacked Sydney Harbour. One of the submarines fired a torpedo that hit HMAS *Kuttubul*, killing 21 sailors on board. Peggy remembered this clearly, as it was the night of her 17th birthday. This event made her realise that the war was getting very close to home.

Peggy felt that making biscuits was not enough for the war effort, so she decided to join the Women's Australian National Service (WANS). The WANS was a voluntary organisation established in 1940, made up of women trained in air raid precautions, first aid, signalling, mechanics and other key wartime jobs. Army personnel approached the WANS asking women if they wanted to join the Australian Women's Land Army (AWLA) to help farmers. Peggy jumped at the opportunity to join, with the thought of her brother, George, in the back of her mind. However, as she was under the age of 18, she needed parental consent. Peggy knew her father would not sign the consent papers, so she forged his signature. Her father was unhappy when he found out and did not believe Peggy would last five minutes in the AWLA. She was desperate to prove him wrong.

In 1942, Peggy was sent to Leeton, New South Wales, with the AWLA. Many of the AWLA members were housed in a pavilion at the showground. They experienced a range of weather conditions and found living in the pavilion unpleasant.

**Peggy, 1941.**

Image courtesy of *The Sydney Morning Herald*







## Did you know?

When Australian men were sent overseas to fight, it left farms without enough workers. To fill this gap, the AWLA was created in July 1942. The AWLA organised a lot of local and private women's labour organisations already doing work around Australia. At the peak of the AWLA, there were over 1,000 **auxiliary** members and over 2,300 permanent members. To work in the AWLA, women had to be between 18 and 50 years old. Most of the women came from the city and had no experience of working on farms. Women were paid less than men for the same work, and worked an average of 48 hours a week. In January 1943, there was a suggestion to make the AWLA an official military service. But it was not achieved before the end of the war, so the AWLA was never recognised as an official auxiliary service. When the AWLA was disbanded on 31 December 1945, the women did not receive the same benefits and recognition as other women's services. The AWLA was not allowed to march as a group on Anzac Day until 1985, and its members only became eligible for the **Civilian Service Medal** in 1995.

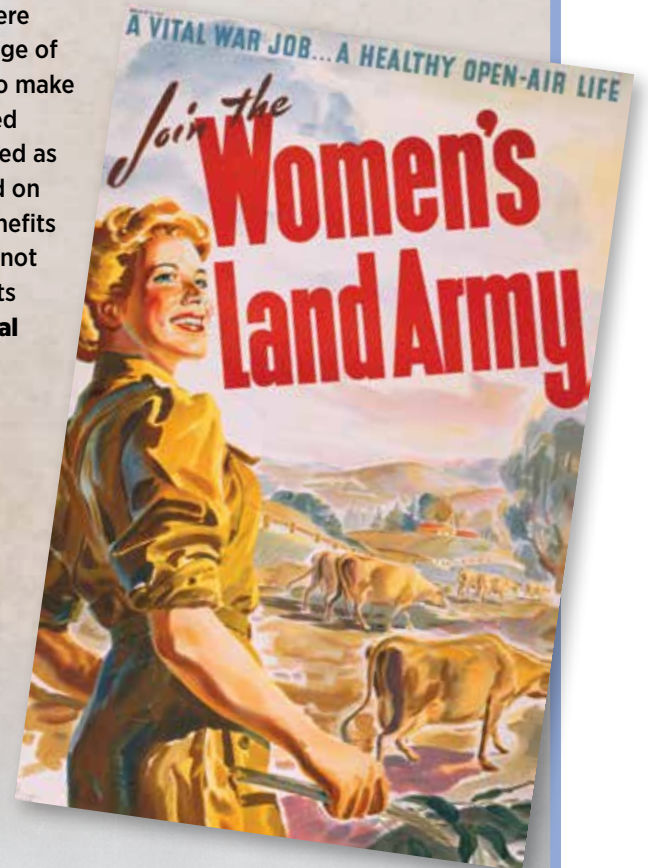
**Why do you think women were motivated to join the AWLA?**

**How might AWLA members have felt about not being recognised as an official military service after the war? Explain your answer.**

Artist unknown, *Join the Women's Land Army*, (1943, offset lithograph on paper, 74.6 x 47.8 cm, AWM ARTV06446)

A member of the AWLA using a four-horse plough, 1944.

*The Herald*, AWM 140339





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All AWLA members were woken at 6 am for breakfast, and they prepared jam sandwiches to take to the farm for lunch. Then they were transported to the farm for a hard day's work. When they returned in the evening, the women bathed in outdoor showers and walked to another part of the showground for their meals. Unexpected visitors entered the pavilion at night, including a snake that was found curled up under Peggy's bed, and a horse that entered to munch on the straw that filled their mattresses. The social life of the AWLA members included weekly dances, picnics, swimming at the pier and watching movies at the Roxy Theatre. Peggy was also given a dog called Soup during her time there. Soup would go to the farm with Peggy and sleep under her bed at night.

**AWLA members picking tomatoes to be canned and sent to the troops serving overseas.**

John Earl McNeil, AWM 014928

**Working overalls worn by a member of the AWLA.**

AWM REL/00167







Peggy's first job on the farm involved climbing up a tall ladder with a bag around her neck and picking oranges until the bag was full. She then worked on pulling up carrots under the blazing sun. Peggy was permanently stationed on a farm at Yanco, just outside Leeton. When she turned 18, Peggy got her driver's licence and was given a truck to use on the farm. She learned how to drive a tractor and plough a paddock using a horse. Her first attempt at ploughing was unsuccessful. Believing she would be very capable, she put the harness on the horse and set out to plough the paddock. Suddenly, the plough tipped over and the horse took off, destroying the carrot crops that had previously been planted.



Members of the AWLA enjoying a well-earned tea break, Queensland, 1945.

Grace Taylor, *Smoko time with the AWLA*, (1945, oil on hardboard, 45.7 x 55.8 cm, AWM ART29758)

Peggy's days also included planting, spraying and picking all types of vegetables, watering the vegetables by hand, and moving sprinkler systems from one paddock to another. For protection, Peggy wore a hat, overalls and gloves. However, the dust and the spray used on farms later proved to be harmful to the health of many AWLA members.

During her time in Leeton, Peggy received a letter from her brother Jack, who was serving in the Middle East. Jack warned Peggy not to work for any Italians because he was fighting them. So the first day Peggy was sent to work for an Australian farmer of Italian heritage, Mr Poppolato, she pretended to be ill. She sat under a tree all day and Mr Poppolato checked on her several times to see how she was feeling. Towards the end of the day Mr Poppolato told Peggy that his son was fighting in the same unit as Jack. Peggy felt so disappointed with herself that she spent many of her free weekends working on Mr Poppolato's farm.

#### Peggy on the farm during the Second World War.

Image courtesy of *The Sydney Morning Herald*







## Factory workers

Women were also needed to take over jobs left by men in essential wartime industries. Many women were recruited to work in factories producing weapons, ammunition, aircraft, uniforms and food supplies. The women worked long hours, often in dangerous conditions. They were usually only paid 54 percent of the average male wage. At the peak of female employment in 1943, a total of 800,000 women were in the workforce.

**Why might women want to sign up and “do their bit”, despite the danger involved in some factory work?**

**Research social changes in Australia following the Second World War. What changes came about as a result of women’s wartime contributions?**

Sybil Craig, *Handing over a respirator (Ruby Wilks)*, (1945, pastel and charcoal on paper, 81.3 x 56.5 cm, AWM ART26119)



A railway line divided the Yanco farm and a prisoner of war camp holding Italians. Some of the prisoners, including the doctors and officers, were allowed to walk around the camp if they kept within a kilometre radius. The first time the prisoners appeared at the orchard where Peggy was picking fruit, she was frightened. However, they shared chocolates and cigarettes with the AWLA members and many of the prisoners spoke some English, so Peggy soon enjoyed talking to them.

**AWLA members at the Leeton showgrounds. Peggy is holding the reins.**

Image courtesy of *The Sydney Morning Herald*







**Peggy wearing her Civilian Service Medal and OAM, 2016.**

Vitus Chu, Australian Institute Of Professional Photography Reflections Project – Honouring our WWII Veterans, AWM2017.520.1.425

When the war ended, Peggy and the AWLA members covered a truck in wattle and drove to Leeton to join the celebrations. Peggy was sent home, and when she reached Sydney with her dog Soup by her side, she felt strange that there was no special welcome home for AWLA members or acknowledgement of their hard work. But her family, including her father, were extremely proud of the work she had done. Peggy returned to work at the Peak Freans biscuit factory. She married naval man John Cecil “Ces” Williams in 1948 and they had four sons: Allan, Trevor, Jeffrey, and Kenneth, all of whom joined the RAN. Ces, Alan, and Trevor all served in the Vietnam War, which worried Peggy a great deal.

As the years went by, Peggy lost contact with many of the AWLA members she had served alongside. She was unaware that an AWLA Association existed for former members, but eventually joined in 1984. The following year, Peggy proudly marched with AWLA members on Anzac Day in Sydney, the first Anzac Day that the AWLA were granted the right to march as an official group. Later that year, Peggy became President of the AWLA Association and spent the next 27 years campaigning for greater recognition of their service. Peggy fought for the right of the AWLA to become members of the Returned and Services League (RSL). This was granted in 1991, and former AWLA members became eligible to receive the Civilian Service Medal in 1995. On the same day that Peggy received this medal, she was also awarded the OAM. In 2012, surviving AWLA members were awarded a certificate of appreciation and a commemorative brooch at Parliament House by the then Prime Minister Julia Gillard.

Peggy was very proud of the AWLA members and her lasting friendships from her time in Leeton. She died on 15 July 2017, survived by her sons, grandchildren and great-grandchildren.

**AWLA woven shoulder titles were produced in strips and cut and sewn to the shoulder straps of AWLA members' dress uniforms as required.**

AWM REL45200





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# A compassionate leader: Commander Eric Feldt

**With the outbreak of the Second World War, Commander Eric Feldt embarked on an important journey. Coastwatchers were needed to assist with gathering vital intelligence. Eric travelled by foot, bicycle, boat and aeroplane through New Guinea, Papua, the Solomon Islands and New Hebrides to recruit as many coastwatchers as possible.**

Eric was born in Cardwell, Queensland, on 13 January 1899. He was one of eight children, the son of Swedish-born parents, Peter and Augusta. Eric attended the local primary school before joining Brisbane Grammar School. Here, he won selection for the 1913 intake of **cadets** into the Royal Australian Naval College in Geelong, Victoria. Eric's leadership qualities and skills were recognised early on. He was very athletic and became captain of the rugby team. After graduating in 1917, Eric was given leave to visit his family before being sent overseas to serve in the First World War. For the remainder of the war, he was stationed on the British ships HMS *Canada* and HMS *Victory*, and returned to Australia in 1919. At the time, the capacity of the RAN was being reduced. Eric did not see a career for himself in the RAN, so he retired in 1922.

Eric moved to New Guinea, which was then an Australian territory, and worked on behalf of the Australian government as a **District Officer**. Aware of the war brewing in Europe, he transferred to the RAN Emergency List in April 1939. At the outbreak of the war, Eric's local knowledge of New Guinea, combined with his previous experience in the RAN, led to his appointment as Staff Officer (Intelligence) in Port Moresby in 1939. He was put in command of the coastwatchers, an intelligence organisation operating in the South Pacific. His job was to oversee and recruit coastwatchers along the islands to the north-east of Australia.



Following his appointment, Eric travelled extensively to recruit more coastwatchers, establish additional stations and ensure all stations had teloradios. For security purposes, he created the code name "Ferdinand" for the coastwatchers, based on the 1938 Walt Disney film, *Ferdinand the Bull*. Unlike the other bulls, Ferdinand did not fight, but preferred to sit under a tree and smell the flowers. Eric wanted this to be a reminder to coastwatchers that their role was not to fight but to sit and gather intelligence.

**Norman Carter, *Commander Eric Feldt*,  
(1957, oil on canvas, 76 x 61 cm,  
AWM ART27504)**





AWM 084139

## Coastwatchers

Being a coastwatcher was similar to being a spy. It involved sending information regarding enemy activity, reporting any plane or ship sightings, and rescuing stranded **Allied personnel**. The majority of the coastwatchers were Australian-born civilians living and working in New Guinea. However, they relied heavily on help from the local people. Coastwatchers were at high risk of contracting jungle infections, and many were captured by the Japanese. Before 1942, most of the organisation consisted of volunteers. Eric was concerned for their wellbeing, and campaigned for the civilian coastwatchers to be appointed to **military ranks** in the Royal Australian Navy Volunteer Reserve so that they or their families could receive a pension. Without military rank, the coastwatchers captured by the Japanese would be classified as spies and executed. Throughout the war, coastwatchers provided invaluable intelligence to the Allies, particularly in the battle of Rabaul and the battle of Guadalcanal. Early detection of Japanese forces by the coastwatchers during these battles allowed the Allies enough time to prepare for incoming attacks.

**Coastwatchers spent many hours patiently waiting to report on Japanese activity. How do you think they would have passed the time?**

**Would you volunteer to be a coastwatcher, knowing the risks?**

AWM REL36396, AWM REL32589





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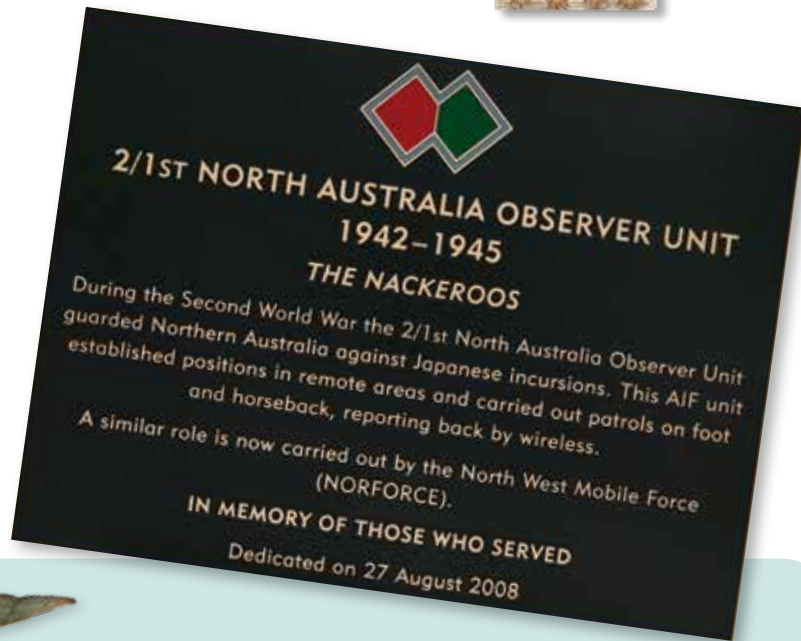
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The 2/1st North Australia Observer Unit, also known as “the Nackerroos”, was an Australian Army unit that operated in remote areas of northern Australia. Similar to the coastwatchers, the Nackerroos carried out patrols and reported Japanese positions. This unit was a precursor to the current North West Mobile Force (NORFORCE). This commemorative plaque is located in the grounds of the Australian War Memorial.

AWM PL00162



## Activity

The coastwatchers relied on teleradios to transmit warnings of Japanese air, naval and ground forces. The teleradio had three separate parts: the receiver, transmitter, and speakers. Each part weighed between 32 and 45 kilograms, making the transportation of the teleradio very difficult. Transporting them required 12 to 16 people. A special frequency was used by the coastwatchers, called “X” frequency. Any signal sent on “X” frequency was immediately received, adding to the effective communication between the coastwatchers and headquarters.

**What would be some of the disadvantages of the teleradios weighing over 100 kilograms? Consider the difficult terrain and jungle environments of Papua New Guinea.**

**Coastwatchers were given a code word to use before sending their message. This was to identify coastwatchers as the sender of a message, ensuring the frequency had not been hacked by the Japanese. What code word would you choose and why?**



Gordon Herbert Short, AWM 015364





During the war, Eric was in charge of organising supplies to be dropped by air or ship to the coastwatchers, and he worried about the dangers that they faced. When Japan invaded New Britain, New Ireland and parts of New Guinea in 1942, the coastwatchers were forced to operate behind enemy lines. Though trapped in Japanese occupied territories, they continued to provide invaluable intelligence to the Allies. Eric recognised the risks involved in these operations, and advised the coastwatchers to **evacuate** if they were in danger.

From 1943, Eric's health gradually declined and he was discharged from the RAN in September 1945. Eric lived with his wife Nancy and their pets until his death in March 1968. His ashes were scattered in the sea off Madang, Papua New Guinea, near the Coastwatchers Memorial Lighthouse.

Eric was awarded the Officer of the Order of the British Empire in 1944.

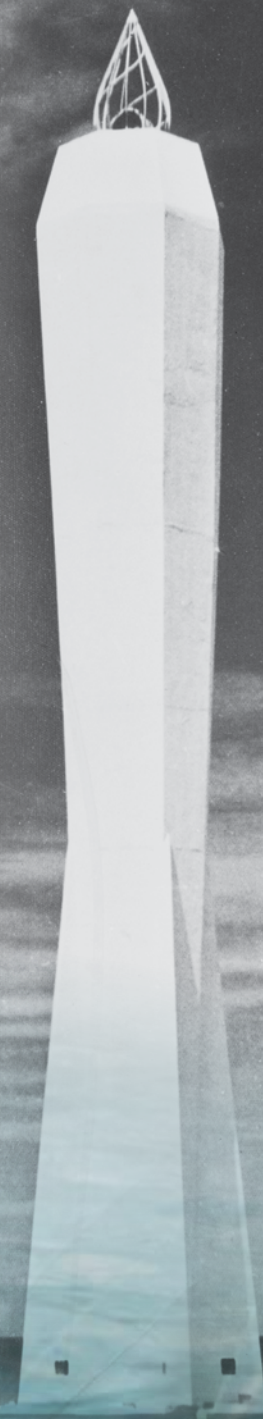
AWM REL32363.001

In his later life, Eric wrote a book about the role of coastwatchers. He also campaigned for a memorial to be built in New Guinea to honour the coastwatchers and the loyal local people for their service during the Second World War. The memorial plaque bears the names of 36 coastwatchers who lost their lives and the words "they watched and warned and died that we might live". Eric attended the opening of this memorial in New Guinea on 15 August 1959.

**The memorial featured a light shining over Madang Harbour. Why might the monument have been designed in this way?**

**What would this memorial mean to the families who lost loved ones while serving as coastwatchers during the Second World War?**

AWM 135176







## Sworn to secrecy: Sergeant Joyce Linnane

**Sergeant Joyce Linnane learnt the value of resilience while working for the Women's Auxiliary Australian Air Force (WAAAF) in Townsville. Isolated, top-secret headquarters were a world away from the life she knew in the city.**

Joyce was born in Sydney in August 1919. She was one of three children, the daughter of Thomas and Emily Linnane. Growing up, Joyce enjoyed going on bushwalks and swimming at the beach. Like many other young people living during the Great Depression, Joyce had to leave school and find a job. She worked as a shop assistant and later in a pharmacy.

Joyce had an interest in learning Morse code and signalling, which she was able to study in her spare time. In April 1942 she enlisted in the WAAAF. Joyce's father supported her decision to join the WAAAF, believing it would be a great experience, but her mother worried when she found out Joyce might have to move far away.

**A WAAAF officer's blue peaked cap.**

AWM REL33961

**What symbols can you see on the cap?  
What might the crown represent?**



**Joyce, 1942.**

AWM P00123.009



*Joyce Linnane*

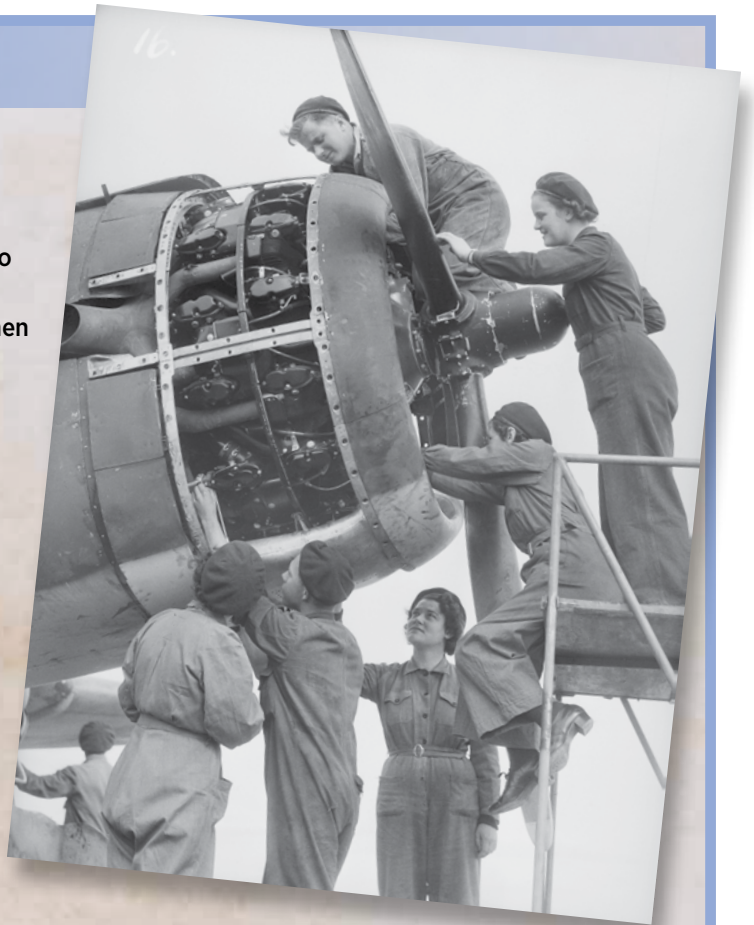




## Did you know?

The WAAAF was created in March 1941 after a year of lobbying from women who were keen to serve in some way other than nursing. The first WAAAF recruits were sent to Townsville in March 1941 to work as wireless telegraphists and **teleprinter** operators. Women in the WAAAF worked as mechanics, cooks, intelligence officers, clerks, telephonists and drivers. More than 27,000 women served in the WAAAF, making it the largest Australian women's service in the Second World War. The WAAAF was disbanded in 1947 and the Women's Royal Australian Air Force was formed in July 1950. Women were accepted into the RAAF in the 1980s, and the first female air force pilots were inducted in 1988.

**Research the roles of women in the Australian Defence Force today. What has changed since the Second World War?**



RAAF pilots Flight Lieutenant Natalie Pietrobon (left) and Squadron Leader Samantha Freebairn at RAAF Base Amberley, 2013.

A group of WAAAF and RAAF mechanics working on an aircraft engine.

Image courtesy of the Department of Defence  
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AWM VIC1177A





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Joyce was chosen for a special course at Ascot Vale in Melbourne to learn the Japanese **Kana code**, which was quite different from Morse code. When she completed the course, she was posted to the “hush-hush hut” in Point Cook, Victoria. Here Joyce worked on top secret operations for the Central Bureau of Intelligence. Her role included intercepting messages from Japanese submarines. The operators had to maintain a 24-hour watch. They worked for four hours and rested for four hours, as the work required very high levels of concentration. In the four hours of rest, the WAAAF women were still expected to wash, iron, eat, sleep and clean their quarters. They were not given days off.

After Point Cook, Joyce was posted to “Nyrambla” at Ascot in Brisbane. Still working for the Central Bureau of Intelligence, she helped the Americans with the overwhelming amount of intelligence that they were receiving. Joyce transferred information from captured Japanese diaries onto punch cards that were placed into a machine and translated from Japanese to English. Joyce’s American colleagues were concerned about the conditions the WAAAF women lived in and the poor income they received. She recalled the Americans were “very generous people, both the girls and the men, they were always wanting to buy us food and drinks and even while we were working we’d find a Coca-Cola put beside us”.<sup>1</sup>

**WAAAF telegraphists outside the Central Bureau of Intelligence Headquarters at “Nyrambla” in Brisbane. Joyce is in the centre in the middle row.**

AWM P00123.001







Walter Lacy Jardine, *Keep them flying!*, (1942, offset lithograph on paper, 24.8 x 31.3 cm, AWM ARTV01114)

A WAAAF kit bag.

AWM REL25317



A group of WAAAF airwomen hurdling benches during physical training.

*Pix Magazine*, AWM VIC0622



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## Activity

This is the concrete bomb-proof bunker that was camouflaged as a farmhouse in Stuart, Townsville.

**Draw your own plan for a top-secret headquarters. Consider the terrain and include the living area for the WAAAF operators. Where in Australia would you locate the headquarters, and why?**



AWM P01443.003

After six months, the new headquarters near Townsville were ready. Joyce was transferred to an isolated top-secret location in the bush. The intelligence building was bomb-proof and made of solid cement. It had been camouflaged to look like a farm house so it was harder to spot from the air. Working on Tokyo time, Joyce's role was to intercept Japanese air and ground messages. The aerials, camouflaged as trees, were used to listen to radio chatter from Japanese planes taking off from New Guinea. When a signal was received, Joyce would transcribe the message and pass it to her supervisor, who would take it straight into the intelligence room. The position of the aircraft would be identified and a message sent to the nearest RAAF squadron to respond. This process happened in a matter of minutes. The early detection of Japanese movements helped to protect lives.



Joyce (centre) alongside two other Kana operators standing in front of "Nyrambla" in Brisbane, 1945.

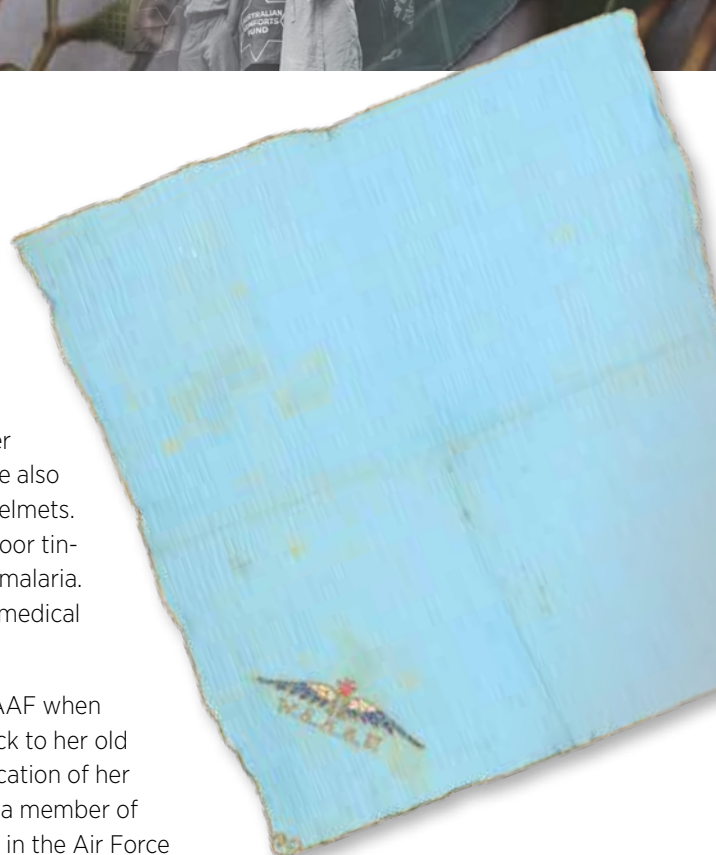
AWM P00123.008





The **barracks** were located 15 kilometres south of Townsville at Roseneath. Joyce lived in a hut with a tin roof. The WAAAF operators relied on bore water, which did not taste nice. There was no hot water in the huts, so Joyce took cold showers. She lived on rations of tinned food and refused to drink the milk, as it was usually off. The meat was often fly-blown and Joyce recalled that if she was really hungry, she would have to pick out the maggots before cooking it. The WAAAF operators had some unexpected visitors that wandered into their huts: “herds of goats that were in the surrounding paddocks ... [would] clatter right through the hut and wake everybody up”.<sup>2</sup> Cane toads were also frequent visitors, often found inside the WAAAF operator’s tin helmets. Joyce even encountered a snake staring down at her in the outdoor tin-can toilet. Mosquitoes were everywhere and carried the disease malaria. Because the barracks were in an isolated location, there was no medical attention and the WAAAF operators had to care for each other.

Joyce had mixed feelings about being discharged from the WAAAF when the war ended. She wanted to travel more but decided to go back to her old pharmaceutical job. Joyce’s parents never knew the nature or location of her wartime work, as she was sworn to secrecy. In 1956 she became a member of the Sydney WAAAF branch and was awarded a life membership in the Air Force Association. She always treasured the friendships she made in the service and regularly attended reunions. Before retiring, Joyce finally got the chance to travel throughout Australia and overseas. She died in December 2009.



A souvenir handkerchief.

AWM REL31853

**Members of the WAAAF celebrate a peace dinner at Lennon’s Hotel Brisbane, October 1945. Joyce is seated third from the bottom, second row from the left.**

AWM P00123.007





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## Courage among chaos: Lieutenant Nell Gould

**On a cold Cowra night in August 1944, Japanese prisoners armed with makeshift weapons and baseball bats charged the wire fences of Number 12 Prisoner of War Camp and escaped into the countryside. The largest prison breakout of the entire Second World War had begun.**

Born in England in 1912, Nell Gould **emigrated** with her family to Australia as a young child. When she was a teenager, Nell competed in a number of athletic disciplines and helped establish the St George Athletics Club. She represented the association in many championship meetings between 1933 and 1941, and competed in the 1938 Empire Games (now the Commonwealth Games) in Sydney. After the outbreak of war, Nell joined the Australian Women's Army Service (AWAS). While her athletics career was put on hold, she was still able to enter as a member of the AWAS in the Army Athletic Championships in 1943.

By 1944, Nell was stationed at No. 12 Prisoner of War Camp in Cowra. The camp was initially built to house Italians who had been captured overseas, but it went on to hold more than 1,000 Japanese prisoners of war as well as a smaller number of other internees. Nell was in charge of the AWAS barracks at the camp and was responsible for the wellbeing of the women serving there.

As the year went on, there were a number of events that made everyone at the camp restless. Dust storms and an outbreak of illness lowered the **morale** of the prisoners and the people serving there. Nell recalled that "although all seemed quiet and peaceful on the surface, toward mid-1944, tension mounted at the camp".<sup>1</sup> During this time, Nell and her friends often walked to a hill that overlooked the huts and guard towers. They looked up at the night sky and discussed the possibility of a breakout, as there had been an unusually high number of baseball bats requested from the store by the Japanese prisoners.

On 5 August at 2 am, the sound of a bugle was heard and as many as 1,000 Japanese prisoners armed with knives, gardening tools and baseball bats charged the camp fences in an attempt to escape. In the chaos, more than 400 Japanese prisoners escaped into the surrounding countryside.



**Nell, 1945.**

AWM P00585.001



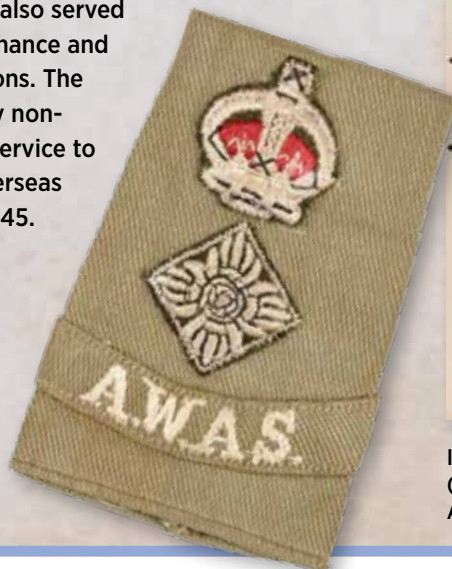


## Did you know?

In August 1941 the AWAS was formed to release men from administrative military roles so that they could serve in fighting units. Roles in the AWAS included clerks, cooks, typists, drivers and signallers. Women also served in intelligence, ordnance and engineering positions. The AWAS was the only non-medical women's service to send personnel overseas during 1944 and 1945.

AWAS shoulder slide.

AWM REL33163



Ian McCowan, *Release a man. Join the A.W.A.S.*, (1941-1945, lithograph on paper, 60.4 x 48.2 cm, AWM ARTV01049)

After the initial escape, Nell organised her fellow AWAS personnel and issued orders. The servicewomen were never to shout unless in an emergency; at night they should walk in groups; and their sleeping huts were to be locked and checked regularly. The AWAS at Cowra were required to assist in the medical care of wounded prisoners, the transportation of prisoners to other camps, and the search for prisoners who had escaped. With hundreds of prisoners on the loose, the safety of the servicewomen became Nell's responsibility as Cowra was declared a battle zone.

*This was the situation in which members of the AWAS found themselves and any protection had to come from their own confines. They had to remember that they were soldiers ... albeit female.<sup>2</sup>*

Over the next few days, Nell and her fellow AWAS personnel followed a set routine. At night, she took responsibility for investigating sightings of escaped prisoners around the camp. As she was not allowed to carry a weapon herself, she was escorted by an armed soldier. When she came back to camp, she checked in with the servicewomen before returning alone in the dark to her sleeping quarters.

Section of barbed wire from the camp in Cowra.

AWM REL41765





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## The Breakout

For Japanese prisoners, to be captured was considered shameful. In an effort to restore their honour, they planned to escape. As rumours circulated about a breakout, the camp administration organised a transfer for some of the prisoners to another camp in Hay, New South Wales. They notified the prisoners of this on 4 August and that night, the breakout took place. Over the next few days the camp guards, troops from a nearby training camp, and the local police force recaptured all the surviving prisoners. In the end, 234 Japanese prisoners died and 108 were wounded in the breakout.



Bugle used to signal the start of the Japanese breakout at Cowra.

AWM REL/04058

Eventually, all the escaped prisoners were accounted for and the restrictions on the camp were lifted. Nell said that throughout the ordeal "the AWAS maintained a high standard of courage and morale".<sup>3</sup> All AWAS members at the camp were offered a chance to transfer to another location after the breakout. Not a single member took up this opportunity. The camp continued to operate until after the war, when the remaining prisoners were transferred home.

**Why do you think not a single member of the AWAS accepted a transfer from Cowra after the breakout?**

**No. 12 Prisoner of War Camp  
Cowra, 1944.**

Geoffrey McInnes, AWM 064284







## Privates Benjamin Hardy and Ralph Jones

Benjamin Hardy and Ralph Jones were stationed at the camp in Cowra on the night of the breakout. Aged in their 40s, they were considered too old for active service overseas. During the breakout, both men pushed past the escaping prisoners to operate a machine-gun. With Benjamin aiming the gun and Ralph feeding him ammunition, they attempted to stop the escape. Both stayed at their post until they were overwhelmed and killed by the prisoners. Benjamin and Ralph were each awarded a **posthumous George Cross** for their actions during the breakout. Two other Australians also died: Private Charles Shepard was killed in the initial breakout and Lieutenant Harry Doncaster died rounding up some of the escaped prisoners.



Ralph

AWM 081386

Benjamin

AWM 081385



Nell (left) with Sergeant Joan Kennedy, enjoying an early morning cup of tea after spending the previous night searching for escaped prisoners.

AWM P00585.003

**What skills do you think Nell needed during this time?**

**How do you think the servicewomen might have felt after the breakout?**

Nell returned to her previous career in athletics and became Sydney's top coach for female throwing events. During the 1960s, she coached the women's Olympic team and eventually became a life member of Athletics New South Wales.

On the 20th anniversary of the breakout in 1964, the Ambassador of Japan and the head of the Australian War Graves Commission opened a military cemetery near the site of the camp. It has since become a centre of commemoration for both Japan and Australia, and is the only Japanese war cemetery located outside Japan.



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# Building postwar Australia: Donato Capezio

**Italian soldier Donato Capezio felt the heat of the Australian sun as he worked on improvements to a farm in Gunnedah. It was hard work, but it was an opportunity that sparked change not only for Don, but for his family back home in Italy.**

Donato “Don” Capezio was born in Muro Lucano, Italy, in November 1907. He was a builder by trade but was conscripted into the Italian army before the outbreak of the Second World War. Don served in the North African campaign until he was captured by Australians at Sidi el Barrani in Egypt in late 1940. After two years in an Allied prisoner of war camp in India, Don was transferred to Australia and sent to No. 12 Prisoner of War Camp in Cowra, New South Wales.

By September 1943, Italy had surrendered to the Allies. Italian prisoners continued to be held in Australia; however, some were given permission to work as labourers in towns and on farms. In August 1944, Don and three other Italian prisoners were sent to work on a farm in Gunnedah owned by First World War veteran Frank Foster.

Frank needed help as the war had limited the civilian workforce. Don recalled that he was treated quite well, but not everything was ideal. Italian prisoners of war had to wear maroon coloured clothing so that they were easily identifiable. This made Don feel uncomfortable as it made him and other prisoners targets of discrimination. Some Australians felt that as they had been at war with Italy, the prisoners were not to be trusted. There was also a belief that the Italians were taking jobs away from local people. Frank always defended them, saying, “The Italians I have employed are hard-working cheerful men”!<sup>1</sup> Don remembered that Frank always stood up for them during their time on the farm.

Despite these challenges, Don worked to improve the facilities on the farm, including walls, sheds, silos and water tanks. His great innovations were an inside toilet for the Foster family and a coolroom to store meat from the farm. As the war came to an end, Don was moved to a number of locations before being sent back to Cowra to await a return voyage to Italy.

**Don on Frank Foster’s farm,  
1944–45.**

Image courtesy of the Capezio family







## Did you know?

During the Second World War, many German, Italian and Japanese citizens who lived in Australia – as well as Australians who had **ancestry** from those countries – were classified as enemy aliens. As Australia was at war with those countries, these people were forced to register with the government and their travel was restricted. Many were **interned** in camps around Australia. Like Don, some were given the opportunity to work on Australian farms to make up for the manpower shortage.

An Italian family interned at Tatura internment camp Victoria, 1939–45.

Colin Thomas Halmarick, AWM 030190/09



Don returned to Italy and tried to restart his life. But the war had destroyed the country's **economy**, making it hard for him to find work. Eventually, he wrote to Frank Foster to ask if he was willing to give Don and his family work and accommodation in Australia. Frank accepted, and **sponsored** both Don and his eldest son Danny to come to Australia. In 1949, Don returned to Frank's farm as a free man.

Don was a builder, not a farmer, so after 18 months working on Frank's farm he decided to look for other work and bring the rest of his family to Australia. With the help of a local friend, he was able to get a job with a building company. Don saved all he could to buy a house and to pay for his family's journey to their new country. His wife Geraldine and their children Alex and Maria joined Don and Danny in Gunnedah in 1951. Don had spent most of the previous decade away from his family, and now they could finally settle in their new home together.

In 1959, Don visited Canberra and was inspired to give back to his adopted country. Australia's capital was still a young city and Don was surprised by the small size of Canberra at the time. He made a sudden decision to move his family, purchasing two blocks of land in Canberra, before returning to Gunnedah to finish his building projects. Danny remembers his father saying, "The capital needs to be built".<sup>2</sup> In 1960, with the help of his two sons, Don quickly constructed their Canberra home. Don opened his own building company that helped to build major projects in Canberra. He never lost contact with the Foster family, and the Capezios attended Frank's funeral in Gunnedah in 1976.

After retiring, Don passed his business to his two sons. His descendants continue to work on projects around the Australian Capital Territory. Don died in 1991, and is fondly remembered by his family.



Don with his family, c. 1980s.

Image courtesy of the Capezio family



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## A journey of survival: Mary Lee (née Cubillo)

**On Christmas Day 1941, Mary Cubillo was given a beautiful doll. The following day, she had to leave the doll and most of her possessions behind as she, her mother and eight siblings were all evacuated from Darwin. Mary's mother was instructed to pack one suitcase for all nine children.**

Mary, a **Larrakia** woman, was born on 23 June 1931 under a tree in Darwin. Her Aboriginal name was Mawuka Garawirritja. Mary's mother Louisa had been forcibly taken from her family at the age of ten and sent to the Bathurst Island Catholic **mission** for Aboriginal children. Her father, Juan Cubillo, was the son of a Filipino **pearl diver**. Mary and her brothers and sisters grew up in a house made of tree branches and corrugated iron. They had to walk many kilometres to attend school. Mary enjoyed running around and playing games with the other children.

In Year Six, Mary's schooling was suddenly interrupted. After the Japanese bombing of Pearl Harbor and the invasion of Singapore, Australians feared invasion. The wartime government decided to evacuate women and children from Darwin to safer areas. On Boxing Day 1941, Mary, her mother and siblings boarded a train and travelled over 300 kilometres south to Katherine. This was Mary's first train ride; she later said, "The train alone frightened the life out of me because we [usually] walked everywhere".<sup>1</sup> In Katherine, Mary's family lived in an old shop and she and her siblings attended the local public school.

On 19 February 1942, news came that Darwin had been bombed. Mary recalled that when she was very quiet, she could hear the bombs being dropped and see black smoke. Her father, who worked on the wharfs, had chosen to stay in Darwin to continue earning money for the family. He was killed in the first bombing raid, leaving Mary's mother alone to raise nine children.



Mary and her husband, Herbert Lee, 1951.

AWM P02588.002

### Activity

These bags were used in Australia during the Second World War to carry personal items in the event of an evacuation.

**Why do you think families like Mary's were limited to one suitcase or knapsack during the Darwin evacuation?**

**If you had to pack a few of your belongings into an evacuation knapsack, what would you choose and why?**

**Describe or draw your answer.**



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## Did you know?

Over 260 Japanese aircraft were involved in the bombing of Darwin on 19 February 1942. The Japanese aircraft were targeting American ships in the harbour. Two separate raids took place and 252 Allied service personnel and civilians were killed. In the following months, Darwin endured 64 air attacks. In total, 97 air raids occurred over towns in northern Australia, taking many lives and causing destruction to homes, shops and ports.

**How do you think Darwin residents felt after the first air raid?**

**How might they have prepared for another attack?**



Roy Hodgkinson, *Oil tanks ablaze, 16 June 1942*, (1942, watercolour and charcoal on paper, 38 x 50.9 cm, AWM ART26629)

A month later, Japanese planes bombed Katherine. Mary and her family ran to the air raid shelters along the Katherine river and listened to the whistling sounds the bombs made as they fell. After the attack, Katherine was considered unsafe for the evacuees and Mary's family were transported to Adelaide.

At the Adelaide train station, the **Red Cross** provided lots of fresh food for the **displaced families**, including fruit, cornflakes, milk, and to Mary's delight, toast. The evacuees also gratefully received warm clothes, socks and shoes, as they were not used to the cold Adelaide weather. This was the first time Mary had worn socks and shoes and she found them very heavy on her feet. She said it was a big shock for Adelaide residents "to see so many Aboriginal people coming in [from Darwin] on these trains ... because the rest of Australia was kept very quiet about the bombing".<sup>2</sup>

## Child evacuees in Australia

For their own protection, thousands of Australian children were sent to live with friends and family in the countryside during the Second World War. A census showed 1,066 women and 969 children were evacuated from Darwin in 1941. Many children were also sent to Australia from other countries, including 577 British children.

**Some children had fond memories of being evacuated, but others found the experience traumatising. How might their lives have changed?**

**How would you feel if you had to leave your home or country for a long period of time?**





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The evacuees were sent 100 kilometres north-west of Adelaide to the Balaklava racecourse, where they lived for the next four years. When they first arrived, nothing had been prepared. Mary's family slept on **hessian bags** filled with straw. They eventually received thin mattresses and blankets. A small community hall was later built, containing a fireplace, dining room and kitchen. Mary's mother volunteered to cook so that she would be able to feed her children. The first time Mary walked to her new school she was frightened as she saw this "woolly thing going baa, baa ... we used to run, run right past them".<sup>3</sup> In Mary's school there were evacuees and locals, but they did not share classrooms.

The Cubillo family in Balaklava, South Australia, 1944. From left to right: back row, Noeline, Mary, Don. Front row, Francis, Michael, Cathie, Mrs Louisa Cubillo, Charlie, Stephen and Lawrence.

AWM P02588.001







When the war was over, Mary and her family were flown to Alice Springs and taken back to Darwin by truck. Mary worked as a cleaner at the local hospital to support her mother and family. In 1949, she married Herbert Francis Lee, who had joined the army after the Second World War. He served with the **British Commonwealth Occupation Force** in Japan but was sent home because of injury to his hands. Mary and Herbert had 11 children and **fostered** four of Mary's brother's grandchildren.

Life was not easy for Mary, but she had always wanted to further her education. She attended night school between her pregnancies and at the age of 60, she moved to Canberra to study an Associate Diploma in Cultural Heritage Management and a Bachelor of Applied Science at the University of Canberra. She was recognised as Scholar of the Year for **NAIDOC week** 1994–95. After graduating, Mary returned to Darwin and became heavily involved in the **Kenbi Land Claim**, successfully campaigning for the return of traditional lands to the Larrakia people. Mary died on 27 October 2016 and is remembered by her daughter, Bilawara, “as an elegant, vibrant and cheeky soul who loved being with her family and friends on her traditional lands”.<sup>4</sup>



**The Lee Family, 1969. From left to right: back row, Tony, Roque, Gary, Bilawara. Middle row, Mr Herbert Lee, Christopher, Mrs Mary Lee, Danella. Front row, Tina, Jason, Ian, Nadine.**

Image courtesy of Bilawara Lee



**United States President Barack Obama provides words of comfort to Mary Lee after laying a wreath at the USS *Peary* memorial in Bicentennial Park, Darwin, 2011. USS *Peary* was sunk during the bombing of Darwin on 19 February 1942.**

Image courtesy of Justin Sanson, *The Daily Telegraph*



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# Hearts and minds: Australian Second World War propaganda

Throughout the Second World War, different forms of text and images were used to encourage Australians to think or act in certain ways. Some messages aimed to boost morale, while others were designed to keep Australians focused on the war effort at home. This targeted messaging is known as propaganda.

Here are a series of propaganda posters which were distributed in Australia during the Second World War. To understand these posters, consider the following questions:

**What can you see on the poster?**

**What message is being presented?**

**How does the artist use the text and images to convey this message?**

**How might Australians have responded to each poster during the war?**

**How effective do you think each poster would be?**

## Austerity

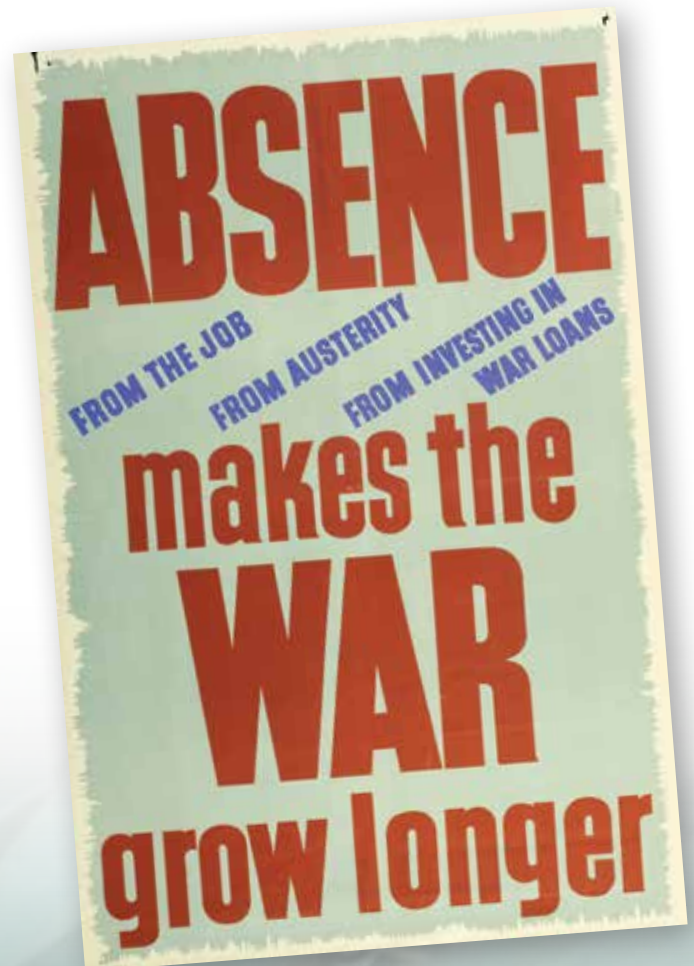
Austerity measures encouraged Australians to work longer hours, use fewer resources, and reuse them if possible. People were encouraged to put any savings into war loans to support the war effort.

**There's a saying, "Absence makes the heart grow fonder". How would that affect the way people at home connected with this poster's message?**

**How would you feel about living with these restrictions?**

**Can you think of any creative ways to reuse common household items?**

Department of War Organisation of Industry, *Absence makes the war grow longer*, (1939–1945, lithograph on paper, 50 x 76 cm, AWM ARTV02274).







## Fear and anxiety

Fear and anxiety were widely used in propaganda. These messages usually suggested that there would be consequences if Australians didn't "do their part".

**How is the Japanese soldier portrayed in this poster?**

Department of Information, *He's coming south*, (1942, offset lithograph on paper, 75.9 x 50.4 cm, AWM ARTV09225)

## Recruitment

Recruitment posters often depicted positive images of camaraderie and adventure.

**Why do you think the women are all smiling in the recruitment poster? What message might it send?**

**What military or civilian services do you think are represented in the poster? How can you tell?**



Maurice Bramley, *Join us in a victory job*, (1943, lithograph on paper, 48.2 x 60.4 cm, AWM ARTV00332)



## Home Security

Some posters discouraged Australians from doing certain things. This poster reminded Australians that they should not gossip about war-related issues.

**Why might it have been important to prevent rumours from spreading during the war?**

**Think about the qualities of cockatoos and owls. What might they symbolise?**

Malcolm Warner, *Those who talk don't know*, (1943, lithograph on paper, 51 x 38.4 cm, AWM ARTV02497)



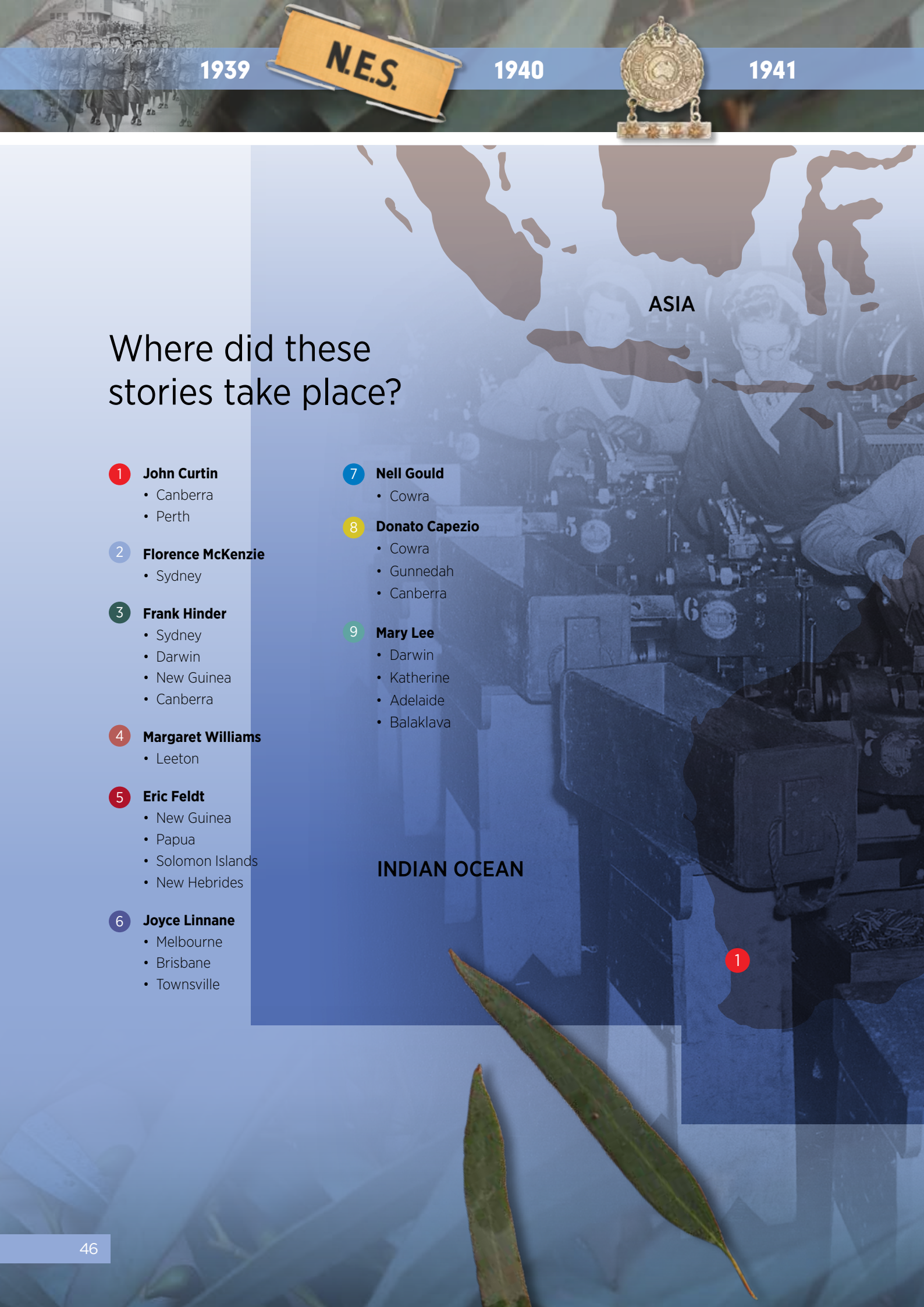
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## Where did these stories take place?

- 1 John Curtin**
  - Canberra
  - Perth
- 2 Florence McKenzie**
  - Sydney
- 3 Frank Hinder**
  - Sydney
  - Darwin
  - New Guinea
  - Canberra
- 4 Margaret Williams**
  - Leeton
- 5 Eric Feldt**
  - New Guinea
  - Papua
  - Solomon Islands
  - New Hebrides
- 6 Joyce Linnane**
  - Melbourne
  - Brisbane
  - Townsville

- 7 Nell Gould**
  - Cowra
- 8 Donato Capezio**
  - Cowra
  - Gunnedah
  - Canberra
- 9 Mary Lee**
  - Darwin
  - Katherine
  - Adelaide
  - Balaklava

ASIA

INDIAN OCEAN

1



1942



1943



1944



1945



3

5

5

5

3

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9

6

5

AUSTRALIA

PACIFIC OCEAN

6

8

7

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8

2

3

9

4

1

3

8

6







# Glossary

<b>abstract art</b>	A type of art that does not try to show real life objects, instead focusing on colour, geometry and linear patterns.
<b>Allied personnel</b>	People who were enlisted in an Allied army, navy or air force during the Second World War.
<b>Allies</b>	The alliance of over 40 countries (including Great Britain, France, the Soviet Union, the United States of America and Australia) that fought against Germany, Italy, and Japan in the Second World War.
<b>ancestry</b>	An individual's family or ethnic descent.
<b>anxiety</b>	A feeling of worry, nervousness or stress.
<b>austerity</b>	Strict economic conditions that control people's ability to spend money.
<b>auxiliary</b>	Providing support or additional help.
<b>Axis</b>	The military alliance of Germany, Italy, and Japan in the Second World War.
<b>barracks</b>	A large building or group of buildings used to house military personnel.
<b>British Commonwealth Occupation Force (BCOF)</b>	BCOF occupied Japan from 1945 to 1952 to enforce the terms of the unconditional surrender that had ended the war against Japan, which also ended the Second World War.
<b>cadets</b>	Trainees enrolled in military services and academies.
<b>camouflage</b>	Disguising people or objects by painting or covering them to blend in with their surroundings.
<b>Civilian Service Medal</b>	This medal is for civilians who served in certain medical, agricultural, communication or construction service groups, and performed difficult work away from home in support of the war effort.
<b>clerk</b>	Someone who performs administrative duties, including keeping records and accounts.
<b>conscription</b>	The compulsory enlistment of people into military service.
<b>disbanded</b>	To break up and stop functioning.
<b>displaced families</b>	Families who have been forced to leave their home or country, usually because of war, persecution or natural disaster.
<b>District Officer</b>	The manager of all government activity in a district of Australia, except for public health.
<b>dummy</b>	Fake or not real.
<b>economy</b>	The wealth or resources in a community and how they are made and used.
<b>emigrate</b>	To leave the country of your birth and live in another country.
<b>encoding</b>	Turning information into code.
<b>evacuate</b>	To be taken from a dangerous place to a safer place.
<b>fostered</b>	The temporary care of a child by a person who is not their biological parent.





<b>George Cross</b>	Awarded for “acts of the greatest heroism or for the most conspicuous courage in the circumstance of extreme danger”, as stated on the medal citation. It could be awarded to both military personnel and civilians.
<b>Great Depression</b>	A period of severe global economic hardship lasting from 1929 until the start of the Second World War.
<b>hessian bag</b>	A sack made from coarse, woven fabric.
<b>intelligence</b>	Information about enemy activity.
<b>interned</b>	Being held in a prison or camp for political or military reasons.
<b>Kana code</b>	The Japanese equivalent of Morse code.
<b>Kenbi Land Claim</b>	A land claim by the traditional owners of the Cox Peninsula area in the Northern Territory.
<b>Larrakia</b>	The traditional owners of the Darwin region are the Larrakia people.
<b>Leader of the Opposition</b>	In Parliament, the leader of the largest party not in government.
<b>manpower</b>	The number of people available for work.
<b>merchant navy</b>	A nation’s commercial shipping and its crews.
<b>military ranks</b>	The different levels of authority and responsibility within the armed forces.
<b>mission</b>	A place where churches or religious groups held Aboriginal peoples, prepared them for work, and trained them in Christian ideals.
<b>mobile</b>	Having the ability to be moved freely and easily.
<b>morale</b>	The level of confidence and discipline in an armed or civilian force.
<b>Morse code</b>	A code in which letters and numbers are represented by combinations of long and short sound or light signals.
<b>NAIDOC week</b>	A week established by the National Aborigines and Islanders Day Observance Committee (NAIDOC) in Australia, which celebrates the culture, history and achievements of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.
<b>Order of Australia</b>	An honour awarded to Australians who have demonstrated exceptional service and achievement.
<b>Order of the British Empire</b>	An honour awarded to individuals who have made significant contributions to the arts, sciences or charitable causes in the United Kingdom.
<b>pacifist</b>	A person who believes wars and violence cannot be justified morally.
<b>pearl diver</b>	A person who dives into the sea to collect pearl oysters or mussels.
<b>posthumous</b>	Occurring after a person has died.
<b>rationing</b>	Regulations that restrict the consumption of goods such as food, clothing, and petrol in wartime or other times when there is little of these things.
<b>reconnaissance</b>	The act of inspecting a region to uncover information about military activity and resources.
<b>Red Cross</b>	An international organisation providing humanitarian and medical aid to those in need.
<b>regulations</b>	An order issued by a government department or agency that has the force of law.



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**socialist**

A person who advocates or practices socialism. Socialism is a political theory which holds that the means of production, distribution, and exchange of goods and services should be owned by the community as a whole.

**sponsored**

To be provided with financial assistance.

**surrender**

Cease resistance to an opponent and submit to their authority.

**telegraphist**

People who are skilled in wireless communication (like Morse code).

**teleprinter**

A device used to communicate messages.

**Zero**

A Japanese fighter plane from the Second World War.

**Extensive Air Raid Precaution (ARP) exercises were carried out by 5,000 ARP workers in Melbourne, 1942.**

Robert John Buchanan, AWM 027457A







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AWM REL34665

## Children practising building air raid shelters in Adelaide, 1942.

AWM 045120







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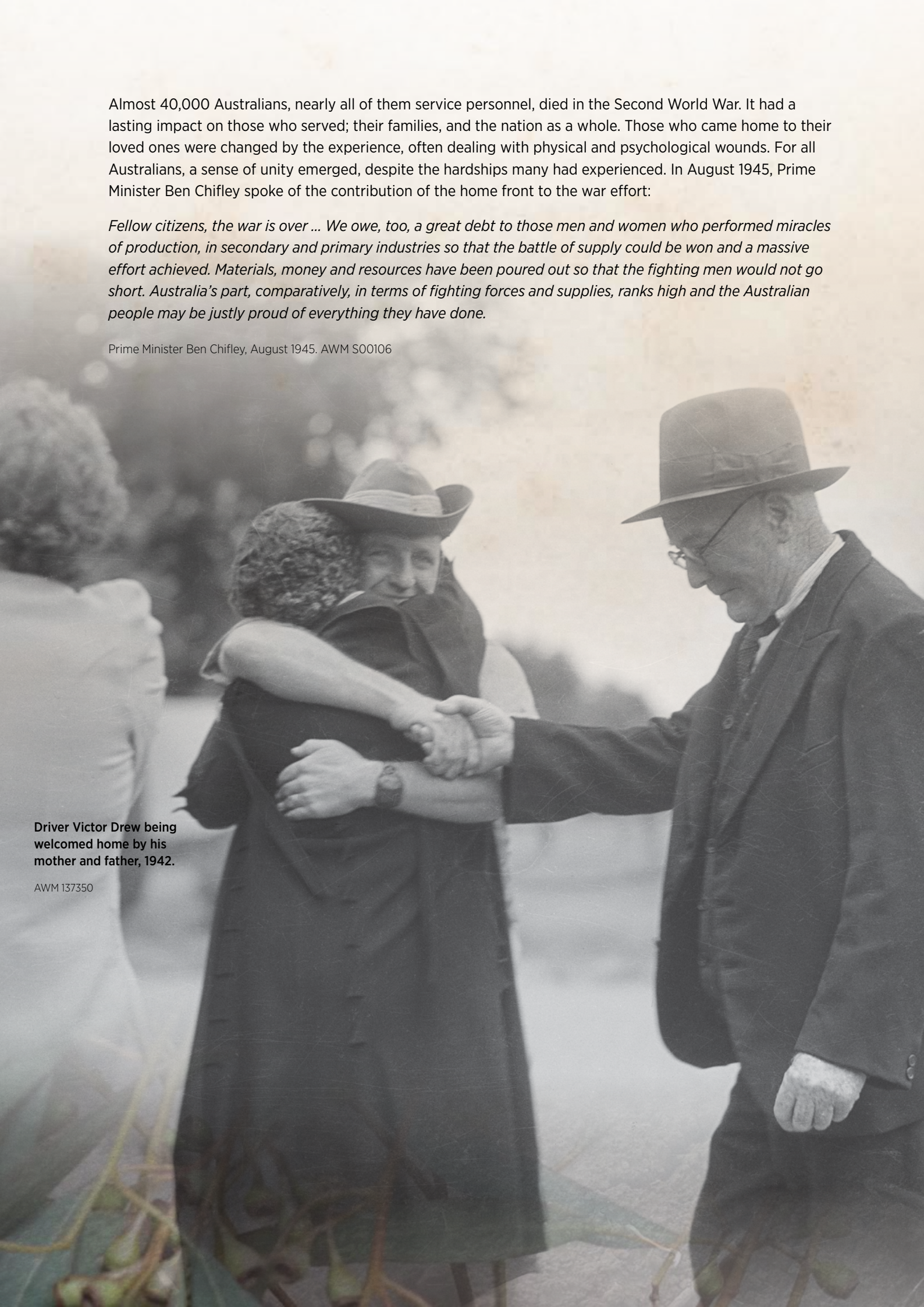
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Almost 40,000 Australians, nearly all of them service personnel, died in the Second World War. It had a lasting impact on those who served; their families, and the nation as a whole. Those who came home to their loved ones were changed by the experience, often dealing with physical and psychological wounds. For all Australians, a sense of unity emerged, despite the hardships many had experienced. In August 1945, Prime Minister Ben Chifley spoke of the contribution of the home front to the war effort:

*Fellow citizens, the war is over ... We owe, too, a great debt to those men and women who performed miracles of production, in secondary and primary industries so that the battle of supply could be won and a massive effort achieved. Materials, money and resources have been poured out so that the fighting men would not go short. Australia's part, comparatively, in terms of fighting forces and supplies, ranks high and the Australian people may be justly proud of everything they have done.*

Prime Minister Ben Chifley, August 1945. AWM S00106



**Driver Victor Drew being welcomed home by his mother and father, 1942.**

AWM 137350





“Australia ... needs your selfless co-operation in guaranteeing and maintaining, for all time, the safety of this country, its industrial and commercial structure and, in the ultimate, of you, yourself”

*The Score Advocate, 28 June 1940*



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