WOMEN WORK FOR VICTORY IN WORLD WAR II

75th Anniversary
End of the Second World War
Victoria Remembers 2020

VICTORIA State Government

OLD TREASURY BUILDING

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OLD TREASURY BUILDING

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Cover image: *The Australian Women's Weekly,* 13 September 1941

WOMEN WORK FOR VICTORY IN WWII

On 3 September 1939 Australia joined Great Britain and other Allies in declaring war on Germany. For the second time within a generation, Australians were at war. Although barred from active service, women flocked to 'do their bit' in other ways. Doctors and nurses were needed in the services. Other women joined voluntary paramilitary groups or swelled the ranks of established charities like the Red Cross and the Australian Comforts Fund. The National Council of Women established a Women's National Volunteer Register and most workplaces had their own Patriotic Funds, raising money for the war effort.

At first women's work went on much as usual. But this changed overnight when Japan entered the war in December 1941, threatening Australia directly. Men fit to fight were conscripted into the services, leaving essential jobs unfilled. Women were called to bridge the gap. From 1942-45, thousands of women moved into jobs previously considered 'men's work'. From the fields to the factories, they produced the food, clothing, machinery and armaments required by a country at war. Even the forces relented, creating women's auxiliary services within the army, navy and air force. Astonished commentators looked on in wonder.

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.

WOMEN IN THE WORKFORCE

The entry of Japan into the war in December 1941 saw Australia threatened directly for the first time. Men were conscripted into the forces from previously exempt industries, leaving serious gaps in wartime production. From August 1942 women too could be directed by the wartime Manpower Board to work in essential industries. Many thousands entered the workforce, some for the first time.

NO JOB FOR A WOMAN!

Many jobs central to the war effort were initially considered unsuited to women. Munitions and heavy engineering employed few women before the war. Heavy rural labour was viewed similarly and at first both employers and unions were reluctant to accept women's labour. Employers doubted women's capacity, while unions feared the competition to men's jobs from cheap female labour. But the Curtin Labor Government reached agreement with the unions, assuring servicemen of their jobs on return. It dealt with the fear of cheap female labour through a special tribunal – the Women's Employment Board (WEB).

> ***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.***
>
> Prime Minister John Curtin, October 1941

Image left: **'Won't you change your job for Me?' Poster advertising Victory jobs, April 1943**

Reproduced courtesy National Library of Australia

This poster was aimed at the 'housewife', urging her to take on a Victory Job for the sake of her man in the forces. The description of war production factories with their 'spic-and-span canteens, bright music and carefully planned rest breaks', was idealistic in the extreme.

Image far left: **Recruitment poster for Victory jobs, 1943**

Reproduced courtesy Australian War Memorial

The woman is glamorous, but determined!

TAKE A VICTORY JOB

The workforce in some industries was transformed during the war. In munitions less than 10 per cent of workers were women in 1939: by 1943 they comprised 50 per cent. Women also moved into more white-collar occupations previously barred to them. For the first time many women workers earned decent wages and were treated with respect. Some commentators worried that working women would lose their femininity, prompting government propaganda posters of glamorous women cheerfully taking a 'Victory job'.

FOR 'THE DURATION OF THE WAR'

With the end of the war came the end of opportunity for women in many industries. Returning soldiers reclaimed their jobs leaving women to return home or to resume their jobs in lower-paid industries. Some had no choice, but many resented the return to poor pay and conditions. The groundwork for general workforce reform had been laid.

Munitions workers in a Bendigo factory, April 1943

Reproduced courtesy Australian War Memorial

Women munitions workers in an ordnance factory in Bendigo heat the barrel of a 3.7 anti-aircraft gun in preparation for the straightening process. Tasks like this were invariably performed by men before the war. Although this factory appears to be spacious and clean, many were not. Note also the absence of any safety equipment.

The men were the bosses; the women did the work.

Elly Blackshaw, munitions worker

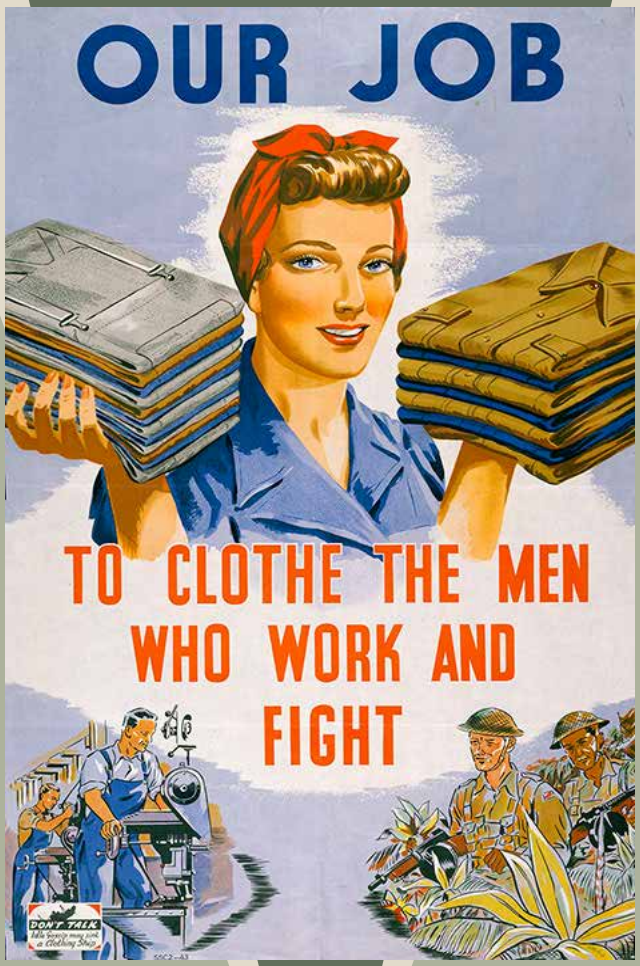
***Working in the detonator section, Commonwealth Explosives Factory, Maribyrnong*, by Sybil Craig, artist, 1945**

Oil on canvas
Courtesy Australian War Memorial

Munitions work could be extremely dangerous. Elly Blackshaw described working as a shell 'filler' at the Maribyrnong Explosives Factory during the war. The danger of explosion meant that she worked in a room by herself. As she later recalled: 'The powder I held in my hands was enough to blow up a ship the size of the QE2'. She remembered that the powder was also 'full of mercury', though there 'was no compensation for this mercury poisoning'. The workers were paid an extra 1s 6d per day as 'danger money'.

Conditions in the factory could be very unpleasant. To keep the powder dry, the temperature was maintained at 90 degrees Fahrenheit (32 degrees Celsius), so they 'sweltered in summer'.

EQUAL PAY FOR EQUAL WORK?



The pre-war workforce was highly segregated. Jobs were classified as either men's work or women's work and pay was set accordingly. The Arbitration Court, which determined rates of pay, assumed from 1908 that the basic wage should enable a man to support a family: women were assumed to be dependants, even though many were not. Women's work usually paid between 50 and 54 per cent of the base male rate.

'THE RATE FOR THE JOB WITHOUT SEX DIFFERENTIALS'

Feminist groups first argued for equal pay in the early century but it was not until the late 1930s that a formal organisation was created to press for reform. The Council of Action for Equal Pay (CAEP) was active from 1937 to 1946, headed by two redoubtable socialist feminists, Muriel Heagney and Jessie Street. Some unions supported the work of the CAEP, but the powerful executive of the Australian Council of Trade Unions was opposed. While the Curtin Labor Government could have enacted equal pay under wartime regulations, it chose instead to placate both employers and the ACTU.

A Women's Employment Board (WEB) was created to set rates of pay in formerly 'male' industries 'for the duration of the war', with the power to set rates at between 60 and 100 per cent of the appropriate male rate. Most were set at between 75 and 90 per cent: women in only a handful of industries were paid 100 per cent. And many essential wartime industries, like clothing and food processing, remained areas of traditional female employment, with low rates of pay until very late in the war. In 1944 women's rates were pegged at 75 per cent, as a temporary desperate measure to attract more women workers into factories.

Image left: **Recruitment poster for work in clothing factories, c. 1943**

Reproduced courtesy Australian War Memorial

By 1943 there was a serious shortage of workers in industries like food processing, clothing and textiles, that traditionally employed women. Australia had agreed to feed and clothe both the Australian and US services, so demand for labour was high. But low rates of pay and long hours made the work less attractive. Employers were reluctant to increase wages, despite wartime 'cost-plus' contracts. Eventually temporary wage increases were implemented by government to induce women back into these factories, supported by active recruitment drives.

A female carrier delivering ice on her regular round, c. 1944

Reproduced courtesy Australian War Memorial

Women replaced men in many commercial roles too. Regular ice deliveries were crucial to keep food from spoiling, as few people owned refrigerators.

'Adele Shelton Smith, The Australian Women's Weekly's Ace Woman Reporter', *The Daily Telegraph*, 3 April 1941

Reproduced courtesy National Library of Australia

World War II provided opportunities for women beyond the factory floor. By 1941 the ABC employed 19 women as announcers, and over 20 women were accredited war correspondents. They did not, however, report on action at the front: mostly they were expected to provide 'human interest' stories.

Melbourne journalist Adele Shelton Smith was the first Australian woman to report from overseas. Representing *The Australian Women's Weekly*, she went with a photographer to Malaya in 1941. Banned from writing articles about the war, Shelton Smith wrote about daily life in the camp, the soldiers' 'healthy meals' and their living quarters, 'more comfortable than home'.

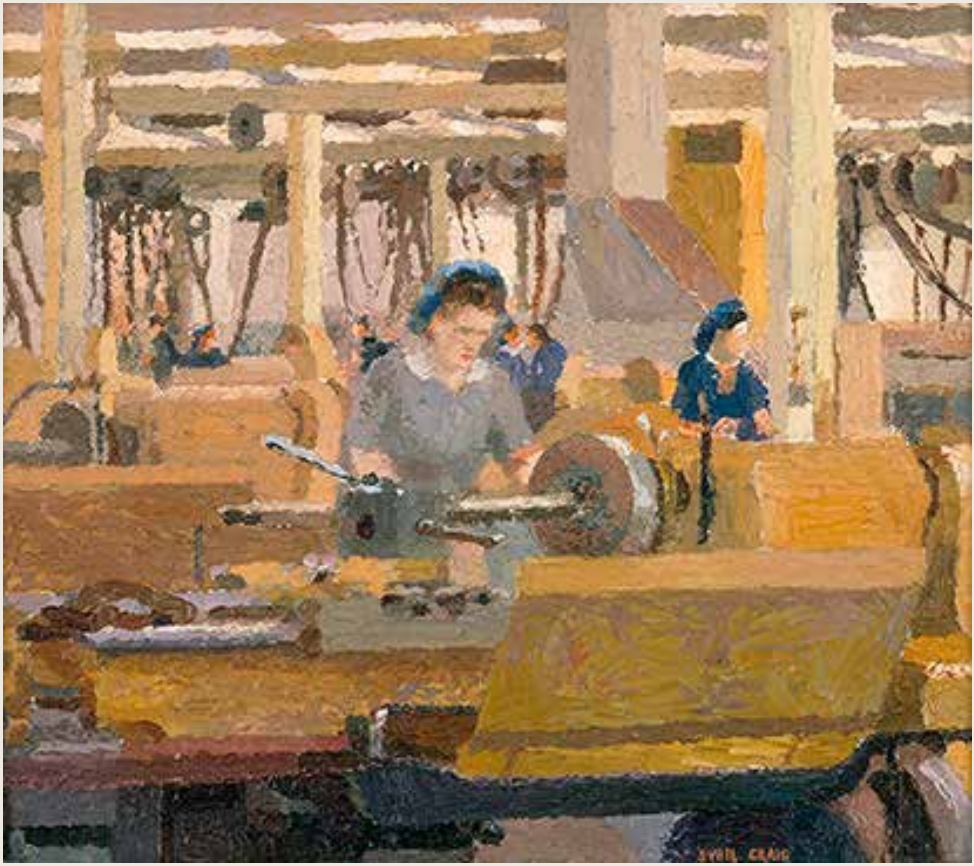
Photograph of a female railway porter employed by Victorian Railways, c. 1944

Reproduced courtesy Australian War Memorial

Victorian Railways employed female porters and ticket collectors from June 1942. The porters found the skirts of their grey uniforms unsuitable and asked for trousers.

All these girls give the lie to any notion that women need lose their femininity in an environment of machinery, noise and the smell of oil.

Dorothy Drain in *The Australian Women's Weekly*, 31 May 1941



***A woman working at a Le Blond Shell Boring machine in the ordnance workshop at the Commonwealth Ordnance Factory, Maribyrnong*, by Sybil Craig, artist, 1945**

Courtesy Australian War Memorial

This painting is by Sybil Craig, one of three women recruited as official war artists in World War II, to record women's contribution to the war effort. Sybil Craig painted women at work at the Commonwealth Explosives Factory at Maribyrnong. She produced over 70 paintings, held by the Australian War Memorial.

Photograph of an unnamed female conductor (a 'connie') changing the sign on a tram, Melbourne, c. 1942-45

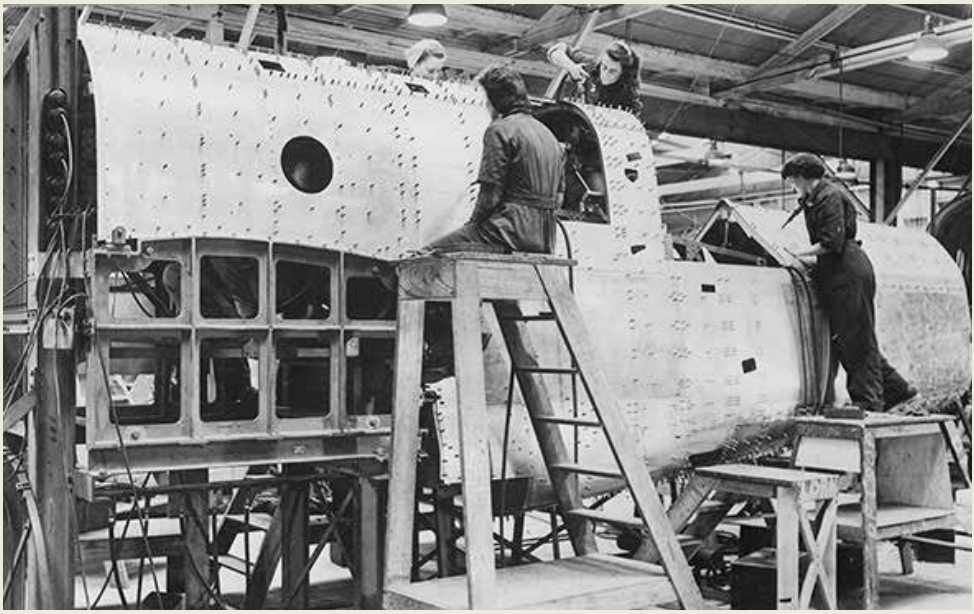
Reproduced courtesy Australian War Memorial

As the war progressed women moved into other traditionally male areas to replace absent men. The first female conductors on trams were appointed in 1941. Known popularly as 'connies', they attracted great public interest, and some prejudice. Female tram conductors were paid the full male wage, but they had to surrender precious ration tickets to buy their own uniforms. They were retrenched progressively from February 1946.

Below: **Women working at the Commonwealth Aircraft Corporation Factory at Fishermans Bend.**

Reproduced courtesy Australian War Memorial

Photographs like this were popular during the war, emphasising what women could achieve in 'men's jobs'.



VOLUNTEERING FOR VICTORY

When war was declared Australia's charitable network swung into action immediately. Established organisations like the Australian Red Cross and the Australian Comforts Fund, both formed during the Great War, expanded existing networks swiftly. Many thousands of smaller, local patriotic groups joined them in regions and workplaces all over the country. Women were the mainstay of these organisations. They joined in their hundreds of thousands, providing essential care to the wounded, and 'comforts' to the able-bodied. In 1944 membership of the Red Cross reached 450,000, many of them women. The Australian Comforts Fund, Salvation Army and Young Women's Christian Association (YWCA) attracted thousands more, while branches of the Country Women's Association and the Housewives' Association assisted in coordinating donations. Many women saw this as a way of 'doing their bit' for the war effort, performing tasks that were familiar extensions of traditional domestic roles.

AN ESSENTIAL SERVICE

The Australian government was well aware of the significant contribution of these voluntary organisations. After 1942 women volunteering were exempt from direction by the Manpower Board, making charitable work more attractive to middle-class women in particular. A government proposal to redirect domestic servants into factories was swiftly withdrawn after prominent women protested that it would interfere with their charity work.

The Grand Ballroom of Government House turned into a Red Cross sewing room, c. 1940
Reproduced courtesy University of Melbourne Archives
Note the single small heater on the floor near the front.

Previous image: ***Voluntary workers, Australian Comforts Fund, Melbourne*, by Sybil Craig, artist, 1945**
Courtesy Australian War Memorial

DANCING FOR VICTORY

Victorian women were also urged to 'do their bit' by assisting to entertain troops at home on leave. Many were happy to oblige, especially after the arrival in Melbourne in 1942 of the first contingent of American servicemen. Women volunteered to cook and serve meals, to clean and wait on tables and to act as dance partners for servicemen looking to enjoy their spells of leave.

Garden Army Girls from Brighton converting a Yarra Bank public flower garden into a 'victory vegetable garden', Melbourne, 1943

Reproduced courtesy Australian War Memorial

Domestic gardens were encouraged, and some public gardens were converted into market gardens, farmed by the Women's Garden Army. This was a voluntary group, overseen by the Young Women's Christian Association (YWCA), encouraging women to grow 'vegetables for victory'. Short courses and demonstrations were organised and households, office workers and Girl Guides lent a hand. The sale of garden produce supported groups such as the Red Cross and the Australian Comforts Fund.

Red Shield representative, Florence Sandells, distributing parcels to members of the Women's Auxiliary Australian Air Force (WAAAF).

Reproduced courtesy Salvation Army Heritage Centre

Australian Comforts Fund members packing Christmas hampers, August 1944

Reproduced courtesy Australian War Memorial

Christmas hampers included a plum pudding, a fruit cake, a small tin of fruit and a can of Nestlé cream. The smart uniforms and badges were supplied by members themselves and were probably a barrier to poorer women joining the organisation.

Volunteer Salvation Army women in the main hall of the Melbourne City Temple, packing goods to send to the troops overseas, 25 November 1944

Reproduced courtesy Salvation Army Heritage Centre

Lord Mayor's toys for Britain appeal, c. 1944

Reproduced courtesy State Library Victoria

Britain ran short of many things during the war, including children's toys. Australian women made large numbers of soft toys (including many kangaroos) for donation.

THE YANKS ARE COMING!

There was huge excitement in early 1942 as the first American servicemen arrived in Melbourne. By June there were 30,000 Americans in the city and near suburbs, with pubs, cafes, cinemas and dance halls all doing a roaring trade. Melburnians embraced Coca-Cola, hamburgers and, by all accounts, the Yanks themselves, with great enthusiasm. With their generous pay, smart uniforms and congenial manners, the American servicemen were soon in demand as escorts.

AMERICAN WAR BRIDES

Under the pressure of wartime, some romances developed quickly. The first marriage between an American serviceman and a local girl took place within ten days of the American arrival, and there was a steady stream thereafter. Some of these romances stood the test of time, but others left the Australian brides in an invidious position – literally stateless. Many had to wait until well after the war to reach America.

'OVER-PAID, OVER-SEXED & OVER HERE'

Inevitably there was some resentment. Brawls broke out between Australian and American servicemen, some requiring police intervention. Moralists expressed concern at what they saw as increasing immorality amongst Australian women – both married and single. Fears about a rising rate of infection from sexually transmitted disease (largely imagined) saw increased surveillance of women and girls and some enforced testing and treatment. In the moral climate of the time, it was generally the women who were blamed.

THE 'BROWNOUT STRANGLER'

Relations deteriorated still further when three women were brutally murdered in Melbourne in May 1942, with rumours that an American serviceman had been seen in the vicinity of each. Fear of the so-called 'Brownout Strangler' gripped the city and women working late shifts were often accompanied to trams and trains by male colleagues. Private Edward Leonski was soon identified as the culprit, and confessed to the crimes. American Commander General Douglas Macarthur's response was swift and decisive. Leonski was found guilty at an American military court martial and was hanged at Pentridge Prison in November 1942.

Image left: **'Don't risk it feller', poster, early 1940s**

Reproduced courtesy City of Melbourne Art and Heritage Collection

This public health education poster – 'FOR EXHIBITION IN BROTHELS ONLY' – aimed to reduce the incidence of sexually transmitted diseases. Servicemen were also warned 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 little discussion about the men themselves spreading infection.

17 JUL 1942 PUBLIC LIBRARY OF VICTORIA

Truth

17 JUL 1942 PUBLIC LIBRARY OF VICTORIA

No. 2696 (Registered at the General Post Office, Melbourne, for Transmission by Post as a Newspaper.) MELBOURNE, SATURDAY, JULY 18, 1942 Price: FOURPENCE

DRAMATIC SCENES AT MURDER TRIAL

MAY 3—May 9—May 18. Shattering days in Victoria's criminal history. On each day a woman found brutally done to death, each murdered by strangulation, each within a mile of the other—one in the city itself, one at its south gate, one at its north. Nothing like it had ever happened before, and in a wave of public horror and something near to fear, detectives by the dozen began what seemed at first an impossible task—to find the killer or killers. Early deduction pointed to the crimes being "pattern killings," and when the field of investigation narrowed down, United States Army authorities joined Victorian detectives in the hunt.

The murdered women: — Miss Gladys Hosking (far right), Mrs. Pauline Buchan Thompson (centre), and Mrs. Ivy Violet McLeod.

AMAZINGLY quickly, Edward Joseph Leonski, 24-year-old American private, was arrested. A legal precedent was established, and he faced officers of his own country in a General Court-Martial according to American law, pleading not guilty to the trio of brown-out murders—Mrs. Ivy Violet McLeod (40), at Albert Park; Mrs. Pauline Buchan Thompson (31), at Spring Street, City; and Miss Gladys Lilian Hosking (40), at Royal Park.

Starting on July 13, Leonski's trial made history and created more public interest than has any other criminal proceeding at any time.

The public was excluded from the hearing which began with the production from a special medical board of a report declaring Leonski to be sane. The trial was on!

Tall, dark, very personable, and strongly built, Leonski's attitude at the trial is intense as he sits with his counsel guarded by three armed military police. Yet his intensity is ready always to relax at the bidding of his hair-trigger laugh and smile when any humor, unconscious or not, splits the dignity of the Court-Martial.

And it is dignified. There is nothing about it that checks with court scenes we have seen on the Hollywood screen. Counsel certainly do not stand fast as counsel in our courts, but they certainly do not carry on with the tactics, or antics, we've seen in the talkies. AND no photographers are allowed.

This comparison between the pictured and the real probably accounts for the keenness of one of our Supreme Court Judges, who, as a privileged observer, sat through the whole of the first day's hearing following every move and word with intense interest.

Three U.S. colonels (one the President), three lieut.-colonels, a major, a captain, and two first lieutenants comprise the "Bench." One of the colonels is the Law Member, who decides points of law with a swiftness which could be followed with profit in our own courts of law.

A Judge Advocate corresponds to our Crown Prosecutor, and leads the evidence garnered in the detectives' investigation.

Leonski has counsel, and an assistant, with whom he consults frequently, and jokes when he has a mind for it.

That appears often. When one witness declared that when Leonski got drunk, he walked on his hands, Leonski rocked with laughter. When another witness gave evidence of identification, Leonski glanced at "Truth's" representatives with a broad smile and a wink.

More than 60 witnesses have been summoned to give evidence, and, added to their stories which the Judge Advocate believes will build up the case against Leonski, he has alleged that the young private made signed confessions to the three murders.

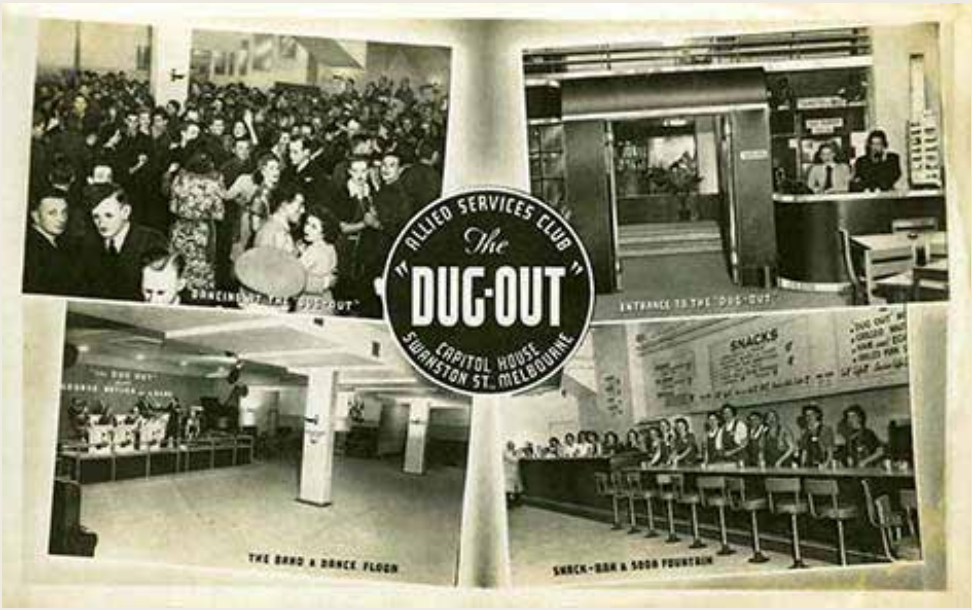
When that mass of evidence is all before the Court-Martial, the excitement of the trial will reach its peak. Will Leonski, on oath, give evidence in his own defence?

Pallors there was in the unhappy, almost bewildered, face of Leonski's tent-mate as he told how Leonski allegedly made him the unwilling and horrified confidant of the Thompson murder the day after the crime was discovered.

"I killed, I killed"; then "Doorstep, doorstep; that's the one," the tent-mate said Leonski muttered as he read newspaper reports of the crime while he smoked, his tent-mate said, cigarettes taken from the murdered woman's handbag, and discussed the possibility of being caught because, try though he would, he couldn't rub his fingerprints off her purse.

Most dramatic point of the trial was when confessions allegedly made by Leonski were read. They were read in a flat voice, which filled the words with a ghastly emphasis and made the phrases: "I choked her; I choked her," have an almost unnatural reiteration which sent a quiet shudder through the silent room.

— MURDER EVIDENCE AND PICTURES — PAGES 2, 3, 4, 5, 8 —



Postcard of the Allied Services Club (the Dug-Out) in the Capitol building, c. 1942

Reproduced courtesy City of Melbourne Art and Heritage Collection

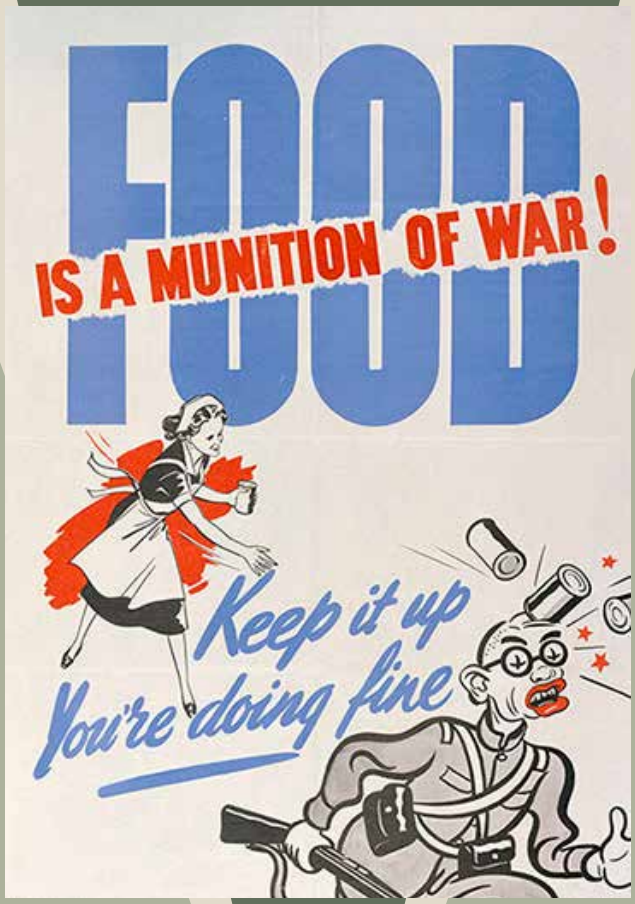
The Dug-Out was operated by the Myer Department Store in the basement of the Capitol Theatre. A nightclub was refurbished as an Allied Services Club for the duration of the war. It provided basic refreshments and telephone calls free and was famous for holding the best dances in Melbourne. The Dug-Out may have gone some way to countering American disbelief at early hotel closing laws. Those who arrived just before the Easter holiday shut-down in 1942 were said to have quipped that 'Melbourne was half the size of the New York Cemetery and twice as dead'!

Image left: **Press reporting of the Brownout Strangler, *Truth*, 18 July 1942**

Reproduced courtesy National Library of Australia

Serial killings were almost unknown in Australia, and the brownout murders prompted sensationalist press coverage. Melbourne heaved a collective sigh of relief when Leonski was caught and confessed.

HOUSEWIVES TO ACTION!



Women were also urged to 'do their bit' at home. Economy was the order of the day, to free up supplies for the troops and to enable families to put any spare cash into war bonds. Otherwise life went on much as usual at first, but with the war in the Pacific came many restrictions and increasing shortages. Rationing of food, clothing, fuel and other essentials was introduced progressively from 1942.

COOKING FOR VICTORY

Managing household budgets became increasingly complex. Inflation early in the war saw a steep rise in the cost of living in Melbourne, before more effective price controls were implemented. Seasonal shortages and rationing added to the challenge. Although rationing was never as severe in Australia as it was in Britain, housewives still struggled to manage supplies. A long-term shortage of clothes pegs was just one small annoyance.

But there was no shortage of advice offered to the housewife during this time. The Housewives' Association, CWA and many women's magazines offered wartime recipes and tips for home-made cleaning products. Special 'austerity' cookbooks and dressmaking patterns were printed. 'Gardens for Victory' sprouted in backyards, public parks and any available waste land. Although food consumption fell overall during the war, rationing probably helped some poor families to eat better than they had in peacetime. Most of the complaints about rationing came from people living in more privileged suburbs.

WARTIME HOUSING

A chronic shortage of housing was a serious and persistent problem throughout the war. Lingering effects of the Great Depression meant that there was already a substantial housing deficit at the outbreak of war: by 1945 the immediate need was estimated at 350,000 dwellings.

Overcrowding and sub-standard housing was worst in Melbourne's inner west, where the influx of workers in munitions and other wartime industries sent demand soaring. By 1944 protest meetings in Melbourne demanded urgent government action.

The standard of housing also varied immensely, but many lacked basic amenities. A survey of households revealed that one quarter of all houses had no water supply to the kitchen and half had no hot water service. Less than one in ten households owned a refrigerator, with another half using an ice chest. The rest made do with a Coolgardie safe. This made daily deliveries of perishable foods a necessity.

Image left: **Food is a munition of war!**

Reproduced courtesy Australian War Memorial

Posters like this encouraged households to produce, purchase, preserve, and conserve food for the war effort.

All the family line up at the ration book issuing centre, Melbourne, 1942

Reproduced courtesy Australian War Memorial

Every adult Australian citizen received a ration book. Used coupon books were exchanged for new ones annually.

A woman takes home her ration of firewood in an old pram, Melbourne, 1942

Reproduced courtesy Australian War Memorial

A window display in a city store shows the price tag and number of coupons required for the purchase of a child's overcoat and cap, Melbourne, 1942

Reproduced courtesy Australian War Memorial

Children, with their prams and billy carts, line up at the wood yard to buy their ration of firewood.

Reproduced courtesy Australian War Memorial

The wood was weighed on scales. There were severe firewood shortages in Melbourne during the bitterly cold winters of 1942-43.

An unnamed First Nations woman studies her new ration book at an issuing centre at the Brunswick Town Hall, Melbourne, 1943

Reproduced courtesy Australian War Memorial

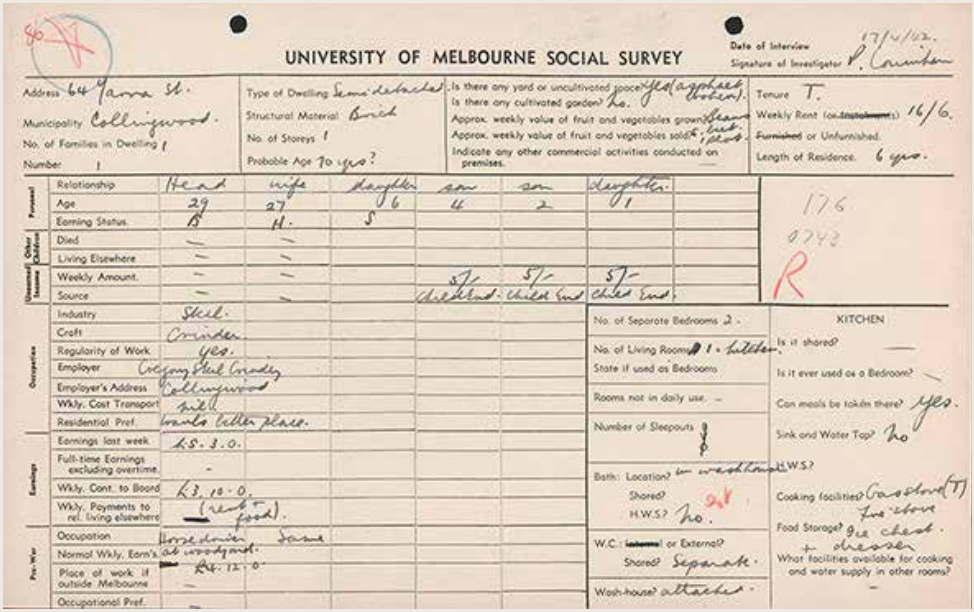
Many poor people may well have eaten better under rationing than they had before.

A busy scene at the ration book issuing centre, Central Richmond School, Melbourne, June 1942

Reproduced courtesy Australian War Memorial

Women line up at a shop counter anxious to use their remaining clothing ration coupons before the new issue, Melbourne, 1944

Reproduced courtesy Australian War Memorial



UNIVERSITY OF MELBOURNE SOCIAL SURVEY

Date of Interview 17/4/42. Signature of Investigator P. Counihan

Address 64 Yarra St. Municipality Collingwood. No. of Families in Dwelling 1 Number 1

Type of Dwelling Semi-detached. Structural Material Brick. No. of Storeys 1. Probable Age 70 yrs?

Is there any yard or uncultivated space? Yes (apples, broken). Is there any cultivated garden? No. Approx. weekly value of fruit and vegetables grown? Nil. Approx. weekly value of fruit and vegetables sold? Nil. Indicate any other commercial activities conducted on premises.

Tenure T. Weekly Rent (or instalment) 16/6. Furnished or Unfurnished. Length of Residence. 6 yrs.

	Relationship	Head	wife	daughter	son	son	daughter.
Personal	Age	29	27	6	4	2	1
	Earning Status.	B	H.	S			
Income (Other than Earnings)	Died	—	—				
	Living Elsewhere	—	—				
	Weekly Amount.	—	—		5/-	5/-	5/-
	Source	—	—		child. allow.	child allow.	child allow.
Occupation	Industry	Steel.					
	Craft	Grinder.					
	Regularity of Work	Yes.					
	Employer	Cregory Steel Works					
	Employer's Address	Collingwood					
	Wkly. Cost Transport	Nil					
	Residential Pref.	Wants better place.					
Earnings	Earnings last week	£5.3.0.					
	Full-time Earnings excluding overtime	-					
	Wkly. Cont. to Board	£3.10.0. (rent + food).					
	Wkly. Payments to rel. living elsewhere	—					
Pre War	Occupation	Horse driver	Same				
	Normal Wkly. Earn's	At woodyard. £4.12.0.					
	Place of work if outside Melbourne	—					
	Occupational Pref.	—					

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No. of Separate Bedrooms 2. No. of Living Rooms 1 + kitchen. State if used as Bedrooms. Rooms not in daily use. — Number of Sleepouts 1. Bath: Location? in washhouse. Shared? Yes. H.W.S? No. W.C.: Internal or External? Shared? Separate. Washhouse? attached.

KITCHEN. Is it shared? — Is it ever used as a Bedroom? — Can meals be taken there? Yes. Sink and Water Top? No. H.W.S? Cooking facilities? Gas stove (T) Fire stove. Food Storage? Pie chest + dresser. What facilities available for cooking and water supply in other rooms? —

University of Melbourne Social Survey card, 1942

Reproduced courtesy University of Melbourne Archives

Even in the midst of war the Australian Government began to plan for post-war reconstruction. A remarkable team of public servants, led by economist H.C. (Nugget) Coombs, set twin aims of full employment and adequate social housing. Part of the planning involved a major survey of existing housing in Melbourne, conducted by a young University of Melbourne economist Wilfred Prest. Prest employed mostly women graduates to visit homes in all suburbs of Melbourne, recording their condition and amenities. It was the most comprehensive survey of living conditions ever conducted.

This survey card was completed by Pat Counihan, wife of the radical painter Noel Counihan. At this time Noel was suffering from tuberculosis and was unable to work. Pat was a teacher, but could earn more money working on the surveys. She was paid 2 shillings and sixpence per survey and managed in this way to earn £5 per week – the equivalent of the male basic wage. She had to pay her own travel money. For many of the young middle-class graduates collecting the surveys provided a profound social education.

'Mrs Housewife', *Argus*, 7 December 1943

Reproduced courtesy National Library of Australia

Households were encouraged to be as self-sufficient as possible, by growing vegetables and keeping chickens in their backyards. Saving food at home became crucial – 'Mrs Housewife' was expected to run a tight kitchen!

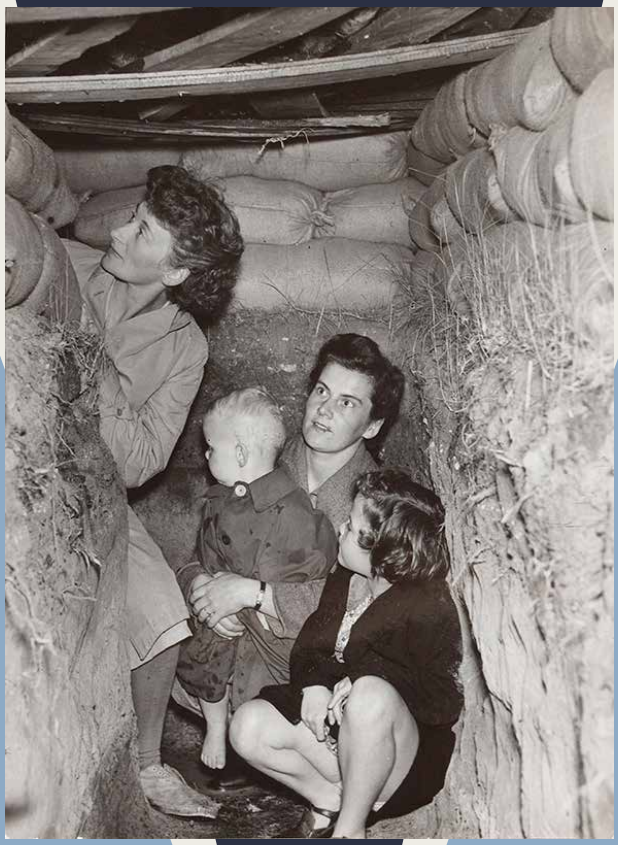
Employees of the Government Printing Office prepare ration books for stapling, Melbourne, 1942
Reproduced courtesy Australian War Memorial

Image below right: **An enquiry office was set up in a Melbourne city store to give customers information on rationing and coupons for food and clothing, June 1942**
Reproduced courtesy Australian War Memorial

A crowd of people at a city butcher shop, Melbourne, 1944
Reproduced courtesy Australian War Memorial

Shopping for essential goods and rationed commodities often meant standing in long queues. Meat rationing was introduced in January 1944, although fish, sausages, chicken, ham and rabbits were not rationed. Animal parts such as brains, tripe, livers and kidneys were more readily available and formed a significant part of people's diets.

CIVIL DEFENCE



In February 1942 Singapore fell to the Japanese. Only days later, Darwin was bombed. Suddenly the war was not 'somewhere else': it was on our doorstep, and 'every Australian, man and woman' was called on to support the war effort.

READY FOR ATTACK

A permanent 'brown-out' was introduced in Melbourne in December 1941. Streetlights were turned off, or hooded, and blackout curtains hung throughout the suburbs. Air raid drills were common, with women appointed Air Raid Precautions (ARP) wardens. Their main duty was to patrol blacked-out streets, ensuring that no lights could alert the enemy.

Women volunteered as auxiliary police officers and emergency ambulance drivers. Many joined the Volunteer Air Observers Corps, watching for enemy aircraft and shipping. It must have been bitterly cold watching through the winter nights.

Voluntary workers, Mrs J.E. Earl and Mrs Wood, making camouflage nets at Nets Limited in Melbourne, c. 1942

Reproduced courtesy Australian War Memorial

Many organisations took on the boring and repetitive task of making camouflage nets. The voluntary National Defence League (Women's Auxiliary) made 400 nets per week at 119 centres, amassing a grand total of 265,000 nets. Women estimated that they required eight hours to complete one net.

Image left: **'Suburban housewives' in their backyard dug-out, Brighton, c. 1942**

Reproduced courtesy State Library Victoria

Melbourne, with its deep-water port, munitions factories and aviation industry was a likely target. Anti-aircraft guns were installed at Maribyrnong and communal bomb shelters built in the city and suburbs. Some suburban households built their own and these instructions were published in the local papers:

Keep your head down when in an open trench, upturned faces draw enemy fire. If there is room, lie right down on the floor. To avoid concussion, never lean against the walls of the trench. The open trench in your backyard may be 4 or 5 feet deep, 4½ feet wide at the top, tapering to 3½ feet wide at the bottom. A roof of corrugated iron covered with earth and built to specifications you can obtain from your air-raid warden converts the open trench into a shelter, giving greater protection.

ALL HANDS TO THE CAUSE

Women were eager to 'do their bit'. They wove camouflage nets and attended first-aid and fire-fighting classes. Some families dug air-raid shelters in their backyards, and mothers practised air-raid responses with their children. Even the fashion industry participated, warning against wearing high heels in an emergency. They recommended:

> *'smart and serviceable' slacks, or the new Siren Suit, consisting of a matching jacket and slacks, with no trimmings, and available in the fashionable colour of 'Alert Brown'.*

THE CRISIS PASSES

By late 1943 the threat of invasion had passed, and the appeal of civil defence declined. Bomb shelters filled with muddy water, becoming a breeding ground for mosquitoes and a hazard for small children. Civil defence organisations were slowly disbanded.

> ***It is not too soon for the Australian Government to plan and prepare this people for a 'scorched earth' policy, guerrilla fighting, and all else that 'total war' entails.***
>
> *Sydney Morning Herald*, 2 January 1942

Some facilities were makeshift. Here nurses feed babies under a table during air raid practice at the Camberwell Babies Home in June 1942.
Reproduced courtesy Australian War Memorial

A civil defence demonstration in Russell Street, Melbourne, October 1943. An ARP warden chases a 'distressed' woman in an attempt to calm her down and avoid mass panic.
Reproduced courtesy Australian War Memorial

Across Melbourne women prepared for the nightly 'brown-outs'. ARP wardens patrolled the suburbs, particularly during Air Raid Drills when the sirens would sound.
Reproduced courtesy State Library Victoria

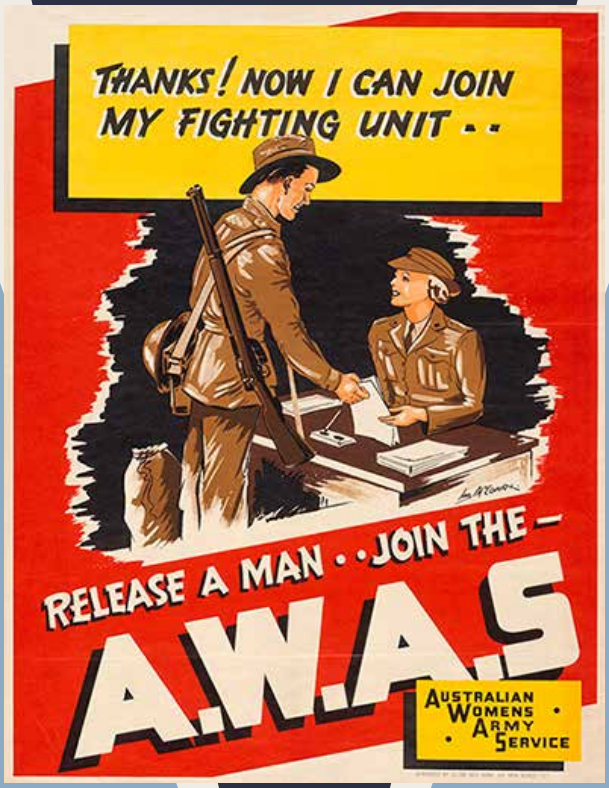
Right: **Members of the Volunteer Air Observer Corps on duty at an observation post at Colac in Victoria.**
Reproduced courtesy Australian War Memorial

There were about 2,800 of these posts throughout Australia. All aircraft heard or seen were reported to the RAAF.

A floor warden directs staff to the basement during an Air Raid Precautions drill at Myers in 1942.
Reproduced courtesy State Library Victoria

Stores, offices and factories prepared for attack. Shop windows were sandbagged to minimise bombing damage and glass was taped in public buildings. City stores appointed wardens and organised air raid practices.

WOMEN IN THE ARMED SERVICES



Before World War II, nursing was the only available service role for women. But shortages of manpower and pressure from women's lobby groups brought about a reluctant change in policy. During 1941 thousands of women joined the new women's auxiliary services – the Women's Auxiliary Australian Air Force (WAAAF), the Women's Royal Australian Naval Service (WRANS) and the Australian Women's Army Service (AWAS). By the end of the war, more than 66,000 women had served.

NICE GIRLS DON'T FIGHT!

A uniformed female soldier challenged clearly defined gender roles in 1940s Australia. Contradictory rumours circulated. Some felt the army would 'masculinise' women: others warned of the potential for 'licentious behaviour'. Moralists cautioned: 'a girl may be a nice girl when she goes in but she doesn't stay nice long'. In response, recruitment posters tried to glamourise participation. Press articles assured the public that:

> *Clothes (civilian) are still the main topic of conversation after lights out … After the war the man who meets an ex-AWAS will find her neither unduly masculine nor a harpy …*

One of the reasons I joined the army was it was the only way I could learn
Servicewoman, Oodgeroo Noonuccal (Kath Walker)

In the 1940s most Australian Aboriginal women worked as domestic servants, with few opportunities for education or other employment. The auxiliary services offered a different path, and at least ten Aboriginal women are known to have served in the Australian Army, Air Force or Navy.

REWARDING SERVICE

Initially the women served as cooks, clerks and kitchen orderlies, but with demonstrated competence (and a shortage of men), their roles changed. AWAS personnel manned anti-aircraft and coastal artillery gun sites and, by 1945, 77 per cent of RAAF positions were available to women. The jobs were equal, but the pay was not: servicewomen were paid about half a man's salary.

'THANKS GIRLS, AND GOODBYE'!

All three auxiliaries were demobilised immediately after the war, with no thought to a continuing role for women. The women had access to repatriation benefits, and could march in the Anzac Day parades, but traditional 'home-builder' roles for women were emphasised. The exceptional work of these servicewomen was largely forgotten.

Image left: **Release a man … Join the A.W.A.S. by Ian McCowan, 1941–1945**
Reproduced courtesy Australian War Memorial

The Australian Women's Army Service (AWAS) was the last of the women's auxiliary services to be formed in August 1941 – to 'release men from certain military duties for employment in fighting units'. More than 24,000 women served in the AWAS and it was the only non-medical women's service to serve overseas - 342 members of the AWAS were stationed at Lae, New Guinea.

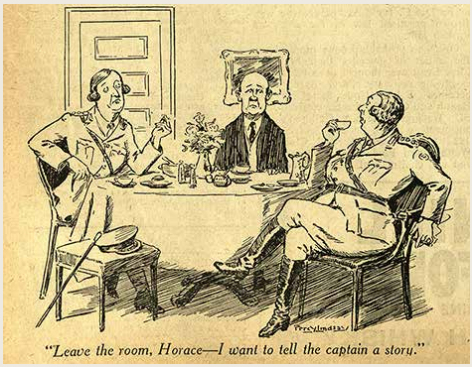
Armourers of the Women's Auxiliary Australian Air Force (WAAAF) fit a machine gun to a RAAF Wirraway at Hamilton in Victoria, June 1943

Reproduced courtesy Australian War Memorial

Formed in March 1941, the Women's Auxiliary Australian Air Force (WAAAF) was the largest of the three women's services. By the end of the war, about 27,000 women had enlisted. Women were posted to bases throughout Australia, but were never permitted to serve overseas, or in combat roles.

AWAS servicewomen march through Melbourne, September 1942

Reproduced courtesy Australian War Memorial



***The Bulletin*, 18 November 1942**

Reproduced courtesy National Library of Australia

Servicewomen behaving like men! Here, the professional relationship between two women overrides the traditional marital relationship.

Aircraftwoman Alice Lovett stands with her Uncle, Private Samuel Alexander Peacock (Sam) Lovett, Melbourne, 1942

Reproduced courtesy Australian War Memorial

Government policy exempted those 'not substantially of European descent' from serving in the military but, by 1942, these rules were relaxed. Alice Lovett enlisted in the Women's Auxiliary Australian Air Force (WAAAF) in 1942. The Lovett family are Gunditjmara people from Victoria's western districts. Twenty members of the Lovett family, including two women, served Australia in both war and peacekeeping missions, from the Western Front to East Timor.

***The Bulletin*, 18 March 1942**

Reproduced courtesy National Library of Australia

At first parts of the media focused on the potentially disruptive influence the auxiliary services might have on sexual standards. These two servicewomen are suggestive of a lesbian couple.

Joan Gibson, a WRANS driver, fills the hopper of a charcoal-burning utility truck at the Flinders Naval Base in Victoria, March 1943. Charcoal was used as an alternative power source during wartime petrol shortages.

Reproduced courtesy Australian War Memorial

The Women's Royal Australian Naval Service (WRANS) was formed in April 1941. By the end of the war more than 3,000 women had served. The first women to be recruited were volunteers from the Women's Emergency Signalling Corps (WESC). Others became coders, wireless transmitter operators, cipher clerks, telephonists, couriers, cooks, stewardesses and drivers. WRANS were not allowed to work outside Australia, or at sea.

Members of an AWAS searchlight crew overhaul their equipment while another member continues to search for planes, Melbourne, January 1943

Reproduced courtesy Australian War Memorial

The auxiliary services allowed members of volunteer organisations such as the Women's Transport Corps and Women's Emergency Signalling Corps to test their new skills. Women served with eagerness and competence, surprising their higher-ranking male colleagues and challenging gendered assumptions.

World War II recruitment poster to attract women to the armed services.
Reproduced courtesy Australian War Memorial

CARING FOR THE TROOPS

"You'll be sorry if you don't, Jean . . ."

"It's a great life, Jean . . . and the girls are fine!"

"But don't you miss your freedom, your home life and all that?"

"Freedom! Why, Jean . . . I'm freer than you are. As for home life, well, I get regular leave . . . and tons of fun, darling."

"But isn't the pay small compared to—?"

"Compared to what? I'm uniformed; clothed, fed and quartered. I get cheaper travelling, clothes issue and coupons. I've got all the pocket money I need—and my deferred pay is building me a nest egg for after the war."

"But how about your job after the war?"

"Listen, Jean . . . I'm getting top notch specialist training which is going to be a wonderful stand-by when this show is over—and I'm entitled to the same rehabilitation benefits as any other soldier."

"Gee! . . . it sounds attractive!"

"I know—and it is. But there's more to it than that. It's the 'kick' we get out of really being in the Army . . . really backing up the boys. It doesn't matter whether you're in the A.W.A.S. or the A.A.M.W.S., Jean . . you can't help feeling proud. There's a satisfaction that you can't get from any other job that I know of."

"But surely it's a little late to join the Service now?"

"Don't you believe it, my dear! It's going to be a long and hard trail for the Army. That's why the A.W.A.S. and A.A.M.W.S. are being built up to full strength. We've just got to back them up."

"I think you're right. Do you think I should join?"

"Yes, I do. And honestly . . . . . you'll be sorry if you don't, Jean."

Every fit, intelligent girl of 18 or over who is eligible is now required for important service with the Army. Full details can be secured from the nearest Army Women's Recruiting Depot or the local Area Office.

Join the A.W.A.S. OR A.A.M.W.S

(AUSTRALIAN WOMEN'S ARMY SERVICE) (AUSTRALIAN ARMY MEDICAL WOMEN'S SERVICE)

Over 4,000 women joined the Australian Army Nursing Service (AANS) during the Second World War. Another 660 entered the Royal Australian Air Force Nursing Service (RAAFNS) or the Royal Australian Naval Nursing Service (RANNS). They served wherever Australian troops were deployed. An additional 8,000 women made up the Australian Army Medical Women's Service (AAMWS). AAMWS were not trained nurses, but worked as nurses' aides, or in clerical and technical positions.

All of these women moved beyond the traditional boundaries of home and family to further the war effort, proving to be courageous and resilient.

Where there are men fighting, there are always nurses.
Sister Florence Syer

World War II brought nurses closer to combat zones than in previous conflicts, challenging prevailing views that war was 'men's work'. Seventy-eight Australian nurses were casualties of war, primarily through enemy fire, or whilst prisoners of war. Some nurses carried weapons for protection.

Vital accomplishment and not sex should be the measuring rod.
Dr Emily Dunning Barringer,
President of the American Medical Women's Association, 1942

By the 1940s, the professional status and prospects of women doctors had improved. More hospital residency posts were available for women doctors and medical research and scientific positions included women graduates. The Army lagged behind. Only 26 women doctors served in the Australian Army Medical Corps during World War II, mostly in administrative roles. No women served overseas: in common with other occupations their work at home freed male doctors for services. Curiously, women doctors received the same pay in the services as their male equivalents, the British Medical Association in Australia insisting on equal pay.

Army nurses embark for the Middle East on the *Empress of Japan* in February 1940.
Reproduced courtesy Australian War Memorial

Image left: **'You'll be sorry if you don't, Jean…' Recruiting poster for the AAMWS, published in *The Australian Women's Weekly,* 17 February 1945**
Reproduced courtesy National Library of Australia

RAAFNS nurses in New Guinea were told to abandon their traditional white uniforms, thought to be too visible from the air. Strong tea was used as a dye.

Reproduced courtesy Australian War Memorial

Sisters Jenny Greer and Betty Jeffrey (right) recovering in hospital in 1945 after their release from Japanese POW camps. Betty weighed just 32 kilograms.

Reproduced courtesy Australian War Memorial

Betty Jeffrey trained as a nurse at Melbourne's Alfred Hospital graduating in 1939. In 1941 she joined the Australian Army Nursing Service and was posted to the 2/10th Australian General Hospital in Malaya. The hospital was evacuated to Singapore in January 1942, and by February, she was ordered to evacuate again. Jeffrey boarded the *Vyner Brooke* hoping to reach Java, but two days later, the ship was sunk by Japanese aircraft. Of the 65 nurses on board the Vyner Brooke, 12 drowned, 21 were shot and 32 became prisoners of war.

Jeffrey spent more than 3 years as a prisoner in the Japanese 'hell camps' in Sumatra. Somehow she survived on the daily ration of a tablespoon of boiled rice and a small pannikin of water. She was constantly sick, suffering from food poisoning, tropical fever, beri-beri, dengue and cerebral malaria. While a prisoner, Jeffrey kept a diary hidden from the Japanese, recording the physical and mental battle for survival, and the death of friends:

23rd January, 1945: Thirty-one of our 32 sisters now have malaria quite badly… Blanche had been very ill in hospital for some time. In the end she must have known she would not get well, because she apologised to one of her friends who was sitting there with her for taking so long to die. She died half an hour later.

Jeffrey was liberated in 1945. She was suffering from tuberculosis and amoebic dysentery and was hospitalised for almost two years. She later wrote: 'You forget nothing, not a thing, from years like those.'

Japanese Soldier Doll 'Bully'.
Courtesy Australian War Memorial

This doll was given to Sister Betty Jeffrey on her birthday in 1944. It was made from a khaki shirt-tail, stolen from a Japanese soldier. The nurses named it 'Bully' after one of the Japanese guards.

Major Lady Winifred MacKenzie in her office at Victoria Barracks, 15 November 1944
Reproduced courtesy Australian War Memorial

The commissioning of Victorian doctor, Winifred MacKenzie, in the Australian Army Medical Corp was a newsworthy event. Journalists reassured readers of Dr MacKenzie's femininity, commenting that her flattering uniform made her 'a trim figure'.

The Australian Army Medical Women's Service (AAMWS), established in December 1942.
The Australian Women's Weekly, 5 May 1945, Reproduced courtesy National Library of Australia

The majority of the AAMWS were drawn from Voluntary Aid Detachments (VADs) who already had hospital experience. Recruitment posters like this managed to emphasise service, whilst emphasising femininity and traditional gender roles.

Image right: **Vivian Bullwinkel and Betty Jeffrey (right), 1950**
Reproduced courtesy Australian War Memorial

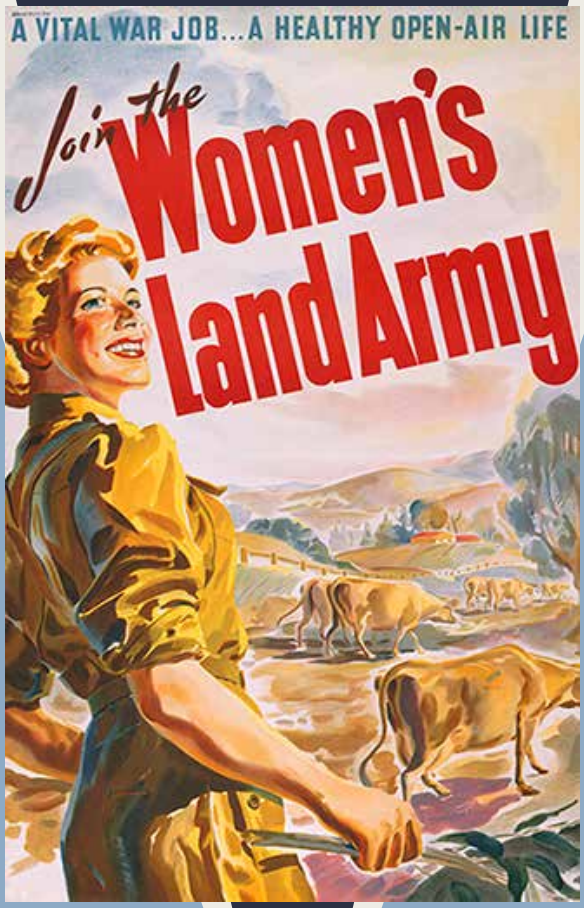
Vivian Bullwinkel was one of 65 nurses who were evacuated from Singapore on the *Vyner Brooke*. After it was attacked and sunk, Bullwinkel drifted for hours clinging to a lifeboat before she struggled ashore on Banka Island with other survivors.

Their attempt to surrender to the occupying Japanese army was ignored. The men were bayoneted and the nurses were ordered to march into the ocean and machine-gunned. Vivian Bullwinkel was shot through the side, but survived by pretending to be dead. She hid in the jungle for 12 days, caring for a soldier who had been bayoneted and was badly wounded. Starvation forced her to surrender and Vivian spent the next three and a half years as a prisoner of war, alongside Betty Jeffrey.

After the war Betty Jeffrey and Vivian Bullwinkel returned home and raised funds for a memorial, honouring nurses who had died in Sumatra. The Nurses Memorial Centre, a 'living memorial' to Australian nurses who had died in all wars, opened in Melbourne in 1949. Betty was its first administrator.

Vivian Bullwinkel had a successful post-war career as a civilian nurse. She became matron of Melbourne's Fairfield Hospital and, as the President of the Royal College of Nursing Australia, was a key player in the struggle to have nursing education moved to universities.

AUSTRALIAN WOMEN'S LAND ARMY



By 1942 Australia's farmers were struggling. The countryside emptied as young men enlisted, and there was a severe drought. Australia's rural industry needed to provision both its own people and the Allied forces in the Pacific. Lobbying to establish a national women's land army increased, despite government scepticism. Finally, in July 1942, the Australian Women's Land Army (AWLA) was formed.

LIFE ON THE LAND

The AWLA was a voluntary group, not an enlisted service. The women were paid by the farmer but earned much less than the men they replaced. Known as 'Land Girls', they travelled throughout Victoria, working in shearing sheds and harvesting crops. No job was too hard: post holes were dug, drains cleared, and dead animals and night soil were buried, in the heat of summer and icy winter.

Conceived in haste, the program's organisation was poor. One farmer wrote to the Director General of Manpower in 1943: 'some girls are so short of footwear that they are working in their slippers'.

Hostels were set up to house some women, whilst others were billeted on private farms. The lucky ones were welcomed, but a few encountered suspicion and sometimes harassment.

WINNING OVER THE DOUBTERS

Farmers were sceptical at first, doubting that a 'city girl' could handle the hard physical labour. Respect for the AWLA came quickly. In 1943 the *Sun* reported: 'The Land Army used to beg the farmers to employ their girls. Now the farmers are the ones to beg its members to help them'.

'There was no glory in it …'

Land Girl, Pamela Gosney

At its peak about 3,000 women were members of the AWLA, while thousands of other women worked unpaid on family farms. In all perhaps 60,000 women contributed to rural industries. After the war, the contribution of the AWLA was largely forgotten. There were no post-war benefits, schemes or honours available to the land girls, and they did not march in Anzac Day parades until 1985. But after the war it was harder to regard these women as the 'weaker sex' - another small step in the move towards women's equality.

Left: **Land Army recruitment poster, 1943**

Reproduced courtesy Australian War Memorial

Women were eager to join the armed services, but the Australian Women's Land Army (AWLA) had less appeal. In an attempt to boost recruitment, government produced colourful posters showing peaceful rural scenes and featuring attractive young women. But these promotional campaigns had little impact and the Land Army remained the 'poor relation' of the women's auxiliary services. Most recruits to the AWLA were unfamiliar with the rigours of farm life and work. According to one land girl: 'The country girls were much too wise, they knew how hard the work was, they all went and joined the WAAAF and the AWAS'.

Victorian 'Land Girl', Dorothy Arrowsmith, milking a cow.

Reproduced courtesy State Library Victoria

The land girls on dairy farms worked hard, starting at 4am with milking. They fed calves, cleaned yards, lugged cans of milk and often transported the milk by dray to the depot. Hand milking was slow and often painful with recalcitrant cows. Despite the isolation and physical rigours, most women relished the fellowship of the AWLA and their contribution to the war effort.

A member of the Australian Women's Land Army practises milking technique on a dummy cow made of papier-maché at a training farm in Darley, Victoria.
Reproduced courtesy Australian War Memorial

Two members of the Women's Land Army, Desley George and Kay Sharkey, pick apples at a farm near Doncaster, Victoria, June 1942
Reproduced courtesy Australian War Memorial

'Land Girls' at the State Research Farm in Werribee, Victoria, c. 1943
Reproduced courtesy State Library Victoria

Women of the Australian Women's Land Army using a transplanting machine, Victoria, c. 1943
Reproduced courtesy State Library Victoria

Marge Doig from Moonee Ponds and Lou Campbell from Brunswick toss flax from a stack.
Reproduced courtesy State Library Victoria

Flax was an important agricultural product during World War II. It was used to make coats and parachute harnesses, ropes and tarpaulins. With shipping disruption in 1939, Britain's flax supply vanished and Australia increased production to compensate. Many land girls worked on flax farms. The work was physically tiring and there were mice in the stacks and snakes in the straw. Fire was a constant danger:

One morning, just below where we were working, a spark from an elevator ignited and within minutes flames were raging fiercely. Suddenly, the fire drill we'd taken so lightly before now became a reality! It was a dreadful time. The damage didn't stop at the loss of the flax, but stock and farms also suffered as the fire spread from Bolac almost to the coast.

A LAND GIRLS' [SIC] LAMENT

It's hard to stay clean in the country when yer plantin' potatoes and peas
When yer hack an' yer hoe, nearly knocks off yer toe and the dust is right up to yer knees.

It's hard to stay clean in the country when yer rise for the milkin' at three
Where a lean on the gate is an offer to mate and luv though it's silent is free.

Yeah, it's hard to stay clean in the country when the Empire yer tryin' to save
When you'll go any length to keep up yer strength and the local young gents misbehave.

No, yer can't stay real clean in the country when the Land Army's got yer in tow
When yer dig for yer nation throughout the duration and yer too bloomin' tired to say 'No'.

Author unknown

Community trucks or wagons picked up the women from the hostels and delivered them to the farms. Others rode bicycles, sometimes up to ten miles each way.
Reproduced courtesy Australian War Memorial

'Land Girls' feeding calves.
Reproduced courtesy State Library Victoria

The women learned to harness and handle teams of draught horses. Here, a member of the AWLA uses a four horse 'scuffler' (cultivator) at the State Research Farm in Werribee, Victoria, c. 1944
Reproduced courtesy Australian War Memorial

The State Research Farm in Werribee was established in 1912 for use by the Department of Agriculture. With the outbreak of World War II, some research activities were suspended and labour directed towards the national war effort. Large areas of the farm were set aside for the production of vegetables to satisfy local demand. Research was conducted into the production of ergotine to treat shell shock, and opium poppies were grown to cover a wartime shortage of morphine. Fifteen members of the Women's Land Army were employed and about 300 land girls received their training at the farm.

A WOMEN'S WORLD IN POST-WAR VICTORIA

Jubilant rejoicing greeted the end of the war in the Pacific. But once the party was over, the serious business of demobilisation and dismantling of the wartime economy began. Women, whose labour had been so crucial in wartime, were expected to make way for returning servicemen. Marriage and the 'Australian dream' of a home in the suburbs were offered as their reward.

'A home for every man and a house for every family'.

Victorian State Development Committee

Post-war reconstruction was impelled by a vision of a more equal society, but it was a vision that reflected pre-war gender roles. The twin aims of full employment and decent housing assumed that 'Mrs Australia' would seek fulfilment in her home and in her marriage. Many women did just that, as a post-war marriage boom was followed closely by a post-war baby boom.

Newspapers and magazines that had supported working women during the war, now focused almost exclusively on women as homemakers. Romantic fiction supported an ideal of fulfilment through marriage and family life.

THE POST-WAR WOMAN

As Victorians cast off the austerity of the war years, a new image of the post-war woman emerged. She was young, feminine and sexually attractive, but above all she was domestic – a devoted wife, mother and homemaker.

Left: **Three workmates celebrate VP Day in Melbourne, 15 August 1945**

Reproduced courtesy Australian War Memorial

Three friends from the Kodak Abbotsford Factory were amongst the crowds in Melbourne on VP Day. Lois Anne Martin (centre) had knitted a special 'victory vest' in anticipation of the celebrations. It is now in the collection of the Australian War Memorial. Her companions were (L-R) Betty Williams and (possibly) Carmel O'Connor.

Image far left:

The Australian Women's Weekly **cover, 25 February 1953**

Reproduced courtesy National Library of Australia

Post-war fashions soon left austerity behind. Christian Dior's 'New Look' launched in 1947, was the style of the decade for the post-war woman. With its wide, frothy skirt, cinched waist and fitted bodice, it exuded youthful femininity and sex appeal.

Above: **Celebrating Victory in the Pacific (VP Day) in Melbourne, 15 August 1945**

Reproduced courtesy Australian War Memorial

The announcement of Japan's surrender on 15 August 1945 saw spontaneous celebrations throughout Australia. In Melbourne jubilant crowds danced in the streets outside Flinders Street Station and in front of the Town Hall.

Advertisement for Masonite, *The Australian Women's Weekly*, 8 January 1949

Reproduced courtesy National Library of Australia

In the post-war period women were bombarded with idealised images of family life, much like this one. This advertisement for the new product masonite reflects the post-war preoccupation with homemaking and with do-it-yourself building tasks. While the men do the carpentry, the glamorous wife in her spotless kitchen cooks for her two perfectly-behaved children.

The Australian Women's Weekly cover, 29 May 1948

Reproduced courtesy National Library of Australia

As the troops came home after six long years of war, Australia experienced a marriage boom. Women's magazines like *The Australian Women's Weekly* were ready with bridal fashions, patterns and advice. *The Weekly* also printed regular features on cooking, including recipes, and in time published cookery books that became best sellers. In the immediate post-war period *AWW* features on home design were also popular.

Children playing at Camp Pell Royal Park, early 1950s

Reproduced courtesy Herald Sun

Overcoming the acute post-war housing shortage took time, and many families were forced to live in shared housing or in former army camps well into the 1950s. Camp Pell, once a base for American servicemen, was one of these. Most of those living in the camps were waiting for state housing. Others who could not afford to employ professional builders sometimes joined cooperative home-building clubs to build their own homes in the expanding suburbs.

Advertisement for Rinso washing detergent, 1950s

Reproduced courtesy National Library of Australia

In the 1950s Unilever, manufacturer of the popular laundry detergent *Rinso*, created a series of advertisements featuring real families. Here 'Mrs Jim Bohan' promoted the value of *Rinso* for her family of seven. The five children are all dressed in perfectly laundered, crisply ironed shirts and frocks. While the boys are playing in the garden, the elder girl is shown helping her mother to hang the clothes on the line. Large families are often shown in these advertisements. Although governments tried to persuade women to have large families, the average remained between two and three children throughout the decade. The ideal family was also unequivocally heterosexual. Alternate sexualities were generally seen as aberrant.

Workers on the Swallow and Ariell production line, Port Melbourne, c. 1954

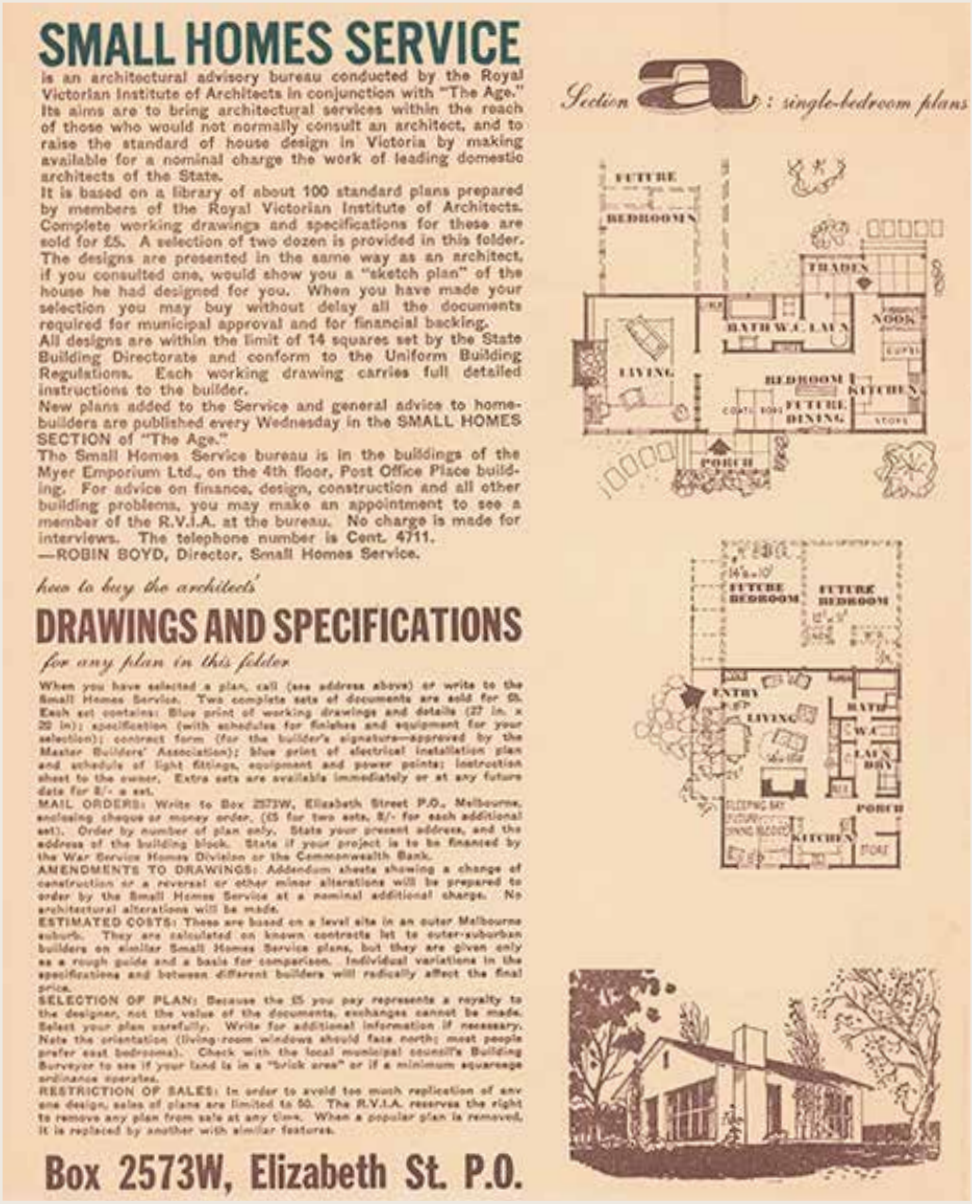
Reproduced courtesy Museum Victoria

Although the domestic ideal of the post-war period placed married women firmly in the home, many continued to work outside it. At the end of the war there was an acute shortage of workers in traditional, low-paid 'female' industries, but by the late 1940s women's employment rates had returned to wartime levels, albeit at lower wages. In 1950 the Arbitration Court set a new pay rate for women at 75 per cent of the male rate. It was an improvement, but a long way from equality. As the post-war migration program expanded, factories increasingly employed migrant women. The Swallow and Ariell factory was the largest biscuit manufacturer in Victoria and a large employer in Port Melbourne.

Advertisement for a Simpson fully automatic washing machine, 1957

Reproduced courtesy National Library of Australia

By the 1950s an expanding range of 'gleaming' whitegoods offered the housewife some escape from domestic drudgery. Refrigerators were often at the top of the wanted list, followed closely by washing machines, but only a lucky few could aspire to the freedom promised by the 'fully automatic' machines advertised here. Most made do with the cheaper wringer models until well into the 1960s.



SMALL HOMES SERVICE

is an architectural advisory bureau conducted by the Royal Victorian Institute of Architects in conjunction with "The Age." Its aims are to bring architectural services within the reach of those who would not normally consult an architect, and to raise the standard of house design in Victoria by making available for a nominal charge the work of leading domestic architects of the State.

It is based on a library of about 100 standard plans prepared by members of the Royal Victorian Institute of Architects. Complete working drawings and specifications for these are sold for £5. A selection of two dozen is provided in this folder. The designs are presented in the same way as an architect, if you consulted one, would show you a "sketch plan" of the house he had designed for you. When you have made your selection you may buy without delay all the documents required for municipal approval and for financial backing.

All designs are within the limit of 14 squares set by the State Building Directorate and conform to the Uniform Building Regulations. Each working drawing carries full detailed instructions to the builder.

New plans added to the Service and general advice to home-builders are published every Wednesday in the SMALL HOMES SECTION of "The Age."

The Small Homes Service bureau is in the buildings of the Myer Emporium Ltd., on the 4th floor, Post Office Place building. For advice on finance, design, construction and all other building problems, you may make an appointment to see a member of the R.V.I.A. at the bureau. No charge is made for interviews. The telephone number is Cent. 4711.

—ROBIN BOYD, Director, Small Homes Service.

how to buy the architects'

DRAWINGS AND SPECIFICATIONS

for any plan in this folder

When you have selected a plan, call (see address above) or write to the Small Homes Service. Two complete sets of documents are sold for £5. Each set contains: Blue print of working drawings and details (27 in. x 20 in.); specification (with schedules for finishes and equipment for your selection); contract form (for the builder's signature—approved by the Master Builders' Association); blue print of electrical installation plan and schedule of light fittings, equipment and power points; instruction sheet to the owner. Extra sets are available immediately or at any future date for £/- a set.

MAIL ORDERS: Write to Box 2573W, Elizabeth Street P.O., Melbourne, enclosing cheque or money order. (£5 for two sets, £/- for each additional set). Order by number of plan only. State your present address, and the address of the building block. State if your project is to be financed by the War Service Homes Division or the Commonwealth Bank.

AMENDMENTS TO DRAWINGS: Addendum sheets showing a change of construction or a reversal or other minor alterations will be prepared to order by the Small Homes Service at a nominal additional charge. No architectural alterations will be made.

ESTIMATED COSTS: These are based on a level site in an outer Melbourne suburb. They are calculated on known contracts let to outer-suburban builders on similar Small Homes Service plans, but they are given only as a rough guide and a basis for comparison. Individual variations in the specifications and between different builders will radically affect the final price.

SELECTION OF PLAN: Because the £5 you pay represents a royalty to the designer, not the value of the documents, exchanges cannot be made. Select your plan carefully. Write for additional information if necessary. Note the orientation (living-room windows should face north; most people prefer east bedrooms). Check with the local municipal council's Building Surveyor to see if your land is in a "brick area" or if a minimum squarage ordinance operates.

RESTRICTION OF SALES: In order to avoid too much replication of any one design, sales of plans are limited to 50. The R.V.I.A. reserves the right to remove any plan from sale at any time. When a popular plan is removed, it is replaced by another with similar features.

Box 2573W, Elizabeth St. P.O.

Section a: single-bedroom plans

FUTURE BEDROOM No. 3
TRADES
BATH W.C. LAUN.
NOOK
LIVING
BEDROOM 1
KITCHEN
FUTURE DINING
PORCH

FUTURE BEDROOM
FUTURE BEDROOM
ENTRY
LIVING
BATH
W.C.
LAUN.
BOX
PORCH
KITCHEN

Brochure featuring a range of 'Small Homes' available, 1959

Reproduced courtesy National Library of Australia

There was an acute shortage of both housing and building materials in the immediate post-war period, with strict building controls regulating house size and materials. The Small Homes Service was an initiative of the Royal Victorian Institute of Architects. Operating from within the Myer Department Store, it offered prospective homeowners affordable advice and access to cheap, architecturally-designed house plans. The plans made use of modernist design principles, influenced by the eminent architect Robin Boyd. Home ownership was a powerful component of the 'Australian dream', and, by 1966, after two decades of full employment, 72 per cent of Australian families were buying their own homes.