

AUSTRALIAN WOMEN IN WORLD WAR I (1914-1918)



Women! Help Australia's sons to win the war, artist unknown, lithograph, c. 1918, 74 x 50 cm, AWM ARTV05621

World War I saw the commitment of large numbers of women employed as nurses and other medical workers. They served in many different places, and were engaged in many different types of nursing. What can we learn about these women's experiences?

On the home front countless women took on voluntary comfort and fundraising roles to support the troops.

However, not all women's roles on the home front were so unifying, as tensions developed over some patriotic, propaganda and political roles undertaken by women.

INVESTIGATIONS:

- 1 What were the experiences of nurses and other medical workers during the war?
- 2 How were women involved in the war on the home front? Was this involvement unifying or divisive?
- 3 What were the continuing impacts of war after 1918?

Teaching suggestions

<p>Essential learning achievements</p>	<p>At the end of this topic students will have developed:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ knowledge of women’s main roles in World War I; ■ understanding of some of the attitudes and values commonly held at the time; ■ empathy with the experiences of nurses and women on the home front; and ■ an informed judgement about the nature of the changes that occurred to women’s roles during the war.
<p>Suggested classroom approaches</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1 Have students look at the Forming Ideas page. This will help them to identify idealised images of the World War I nurse, and then to start to question whether that perception supports reality. 2 Investigation 1 asks students to absorb a variety of information on the experiences of the World War I nurses. The activities associated with these images are designed to help students absorb and personalise the variety of experiences and feelings, as well as to classify and sort them. 3 Investigation 2 asks students to look at a variety of other experiences and roles performed by women during the war. This focuses on what is probably a typical community, and may lead students to want to explore their own local community’s reactions and activities. Students will come to realise that there were a great variety of roles and experiences, and that these could be seen as uniting or dividing a community or certain groups within that community. 4 In Investigation 3 students speculate on the impact of women’s experiences of war over the following decades. Again they will see both positive and negative impacts and outcomes. The use of a war memorial at the end is deliberately provocative. Students will undoubtedly see this as a positive and unifying symbol in their own community — the idea that it may, in the past, have been viewed or looked upon as a jagged shard of discomfort and a potentially powerful symbol of division, will be a challenging one to consider. 5 If World War I is the only unit being studied, students may like to undertake the museum exercise in Unit 7. The DVD section on the Australian War Memorial’s representation of women’s experiences of war (see below) will help them with this.
<p>DVD</p>	<p>Chapter 2 of the DVD in this resource presents a museum study approach to the way the Australian War Memorial represents Australian women’s involvement in World War I.</p> <p>It is suggested that this be used as part of Investigation 1.</p>
<p>CD-ROM activities</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ What were Australian women’s uniforms like over time? ■ Create a National Australian Women’s Memorial ■ Create an Australian Women in War poster and timeline ■ Create a recruiting or information poster ■ Who was Effie Garden? ■ Researching Australian nurses who died in World War I – Using primary source documents
<p>Finding out more</p>	<p>Patsy Adam-Smith, <i>Australian Women At War</i>, Penguin, Melbourne, 1996</p> <p>Marianne Barker, <i>Nightingales in the Mud</i>, Allen & Unwin, Sydney, 1989</p> <p>Joan Beaumont (ed), <i>Australia’s War 1914-18</i>, Allen & Unwin, Sydney, 1995</p> <p>Peter Cochrane, <i>Australians At War</i>, ABC Books, Melbourne, 2001</p> <p>Carol Fallows, <i>Love and War</i>, Bantam Books, Sydney, 2002</p> <p>Michael McKernan, <i>The Australian People and the Great War</i>, Nelson, Melbourne, 1980</p>

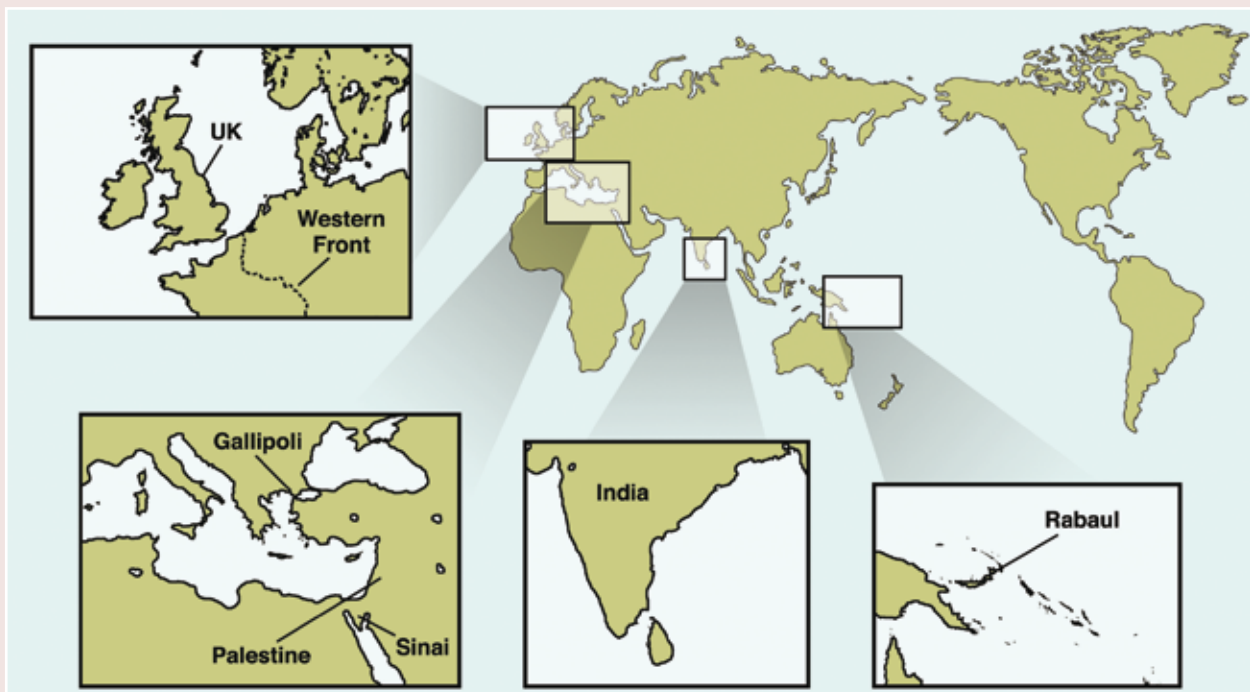
	<p>Jan Bassett, <i>Guns and Brooches</i>, Oxford, Melbourne, 1992</p> <p>Melanie Oppenheimer, <i>Australian Women and War</i>, Department of Veterans' Affairs, Canberra, 2008</p> <p>Melanie Oppenheimer, <i>Oceans of Love. Narrelle - An Australian Nurse in World War I</i>, ABC Books, Sydney, 2006</p> <p>Richard Reid, <i>Just Wanted To Be There</i>, Department of Veterans' Affairs, Canberra, 1999</p>
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Key Data

Conflict	World War I, also known as The Great War.
Period	1914 – 1918
Background to the conflict	<p>In 1914 a series of political tensions in part of the Austro-Hungarian Empire led to the two great sets of alliances, Britain/France/Russia and Germany/Austria-Hungary, and later the Ottoman Empire, going to war. At the outbreak of war, the Australian Government announced that, as Great Britain was at war against Germany, automatically, so was Australia.</p> <p>Many people responded enthusiastically, and a volunteer army was quickly raised.</p> <p>This army was sent to train in Egypt, before becoming a part of the British and allied landing force at Gallipoli, Turkey (Ottoman Empire), on 25 April 1915.</p> <p>Nine months later, and with many more volunteers having been sent to Gallipoli as reinforcements, the force was withdrawn, without having achieved its objectives.</p> <p>After the withdrawal from Gallipoli, some Australian forces were sent to Egypt; most were sent to the Western Front — those areas of France and Belgium where the war was being fought against the Germans.</p> <p>Heavy casualties were suffered on the Western Front, and pressure was on in Australia to keep sending reinforcements.</p> <p>From 1916 to 1918 most of the Australian troops who were sent overseas served on the Western Front, while the Royal Australian Navy served in many parts of the world.</p>
Nature of the conflict	<p>At Gallipoli and on the Western Front the war was mostly fought from trenches. Conditions varied according to the weather.</p> <p>The main feature of trench warfare was armies alternately attacking and defending open ground using machine guns, barbed wire, artillery and infantry soldiers on foot, though there were some set-piece battles and cavalry actions.</p> <p>On the Western Front troops were regularly relieved from the front or rear lines, and were able to take short periods of leave in Britain.</p> <p>In the deserts of Palestine and the Sinai, Australian mounted infantry, called the Light Horse, campaigned against the Turks.</p>
How Australian women were involved	<p>Australian women served in the Australian Army as nurses, and as other medical workers. There were also a number of Red Cross volunteers who provided comforts to the troops, and teachers and fundraisers.</p> <p>Nurses were expected to be single or widowed. Some married women got through the recruiting checks, and some married during their period of service.</p> <p>Of those who served overseas for whom there are detailed statistics, seven were under 21 (though the official minimum age for enlistment was 25), 1184 aged 21–30, 947 aged 31–40, and 91 were 41+.</p>

	<p>Seven women received the Military Medal for bravery under fire, and several died of injuries or disease.</p> <p>More than 2300 members of the Australian Army Nursing Service (AANS) served overseas in war areas. These included: Egypt, Salonika, France, Belgium, Lemnos, India, off Gallipoli, Palestine, the Persian Gulf, Italy, Burma, Vladivostok and Abyssinia.</p> <p>Some nurses and women doctors paid their own way to be involved in medical service during the war. There were also masseuses (physical therapists), blood transfusionists, and other support medical occupations.</p> <p>Other women also performed valuable services. Vera Deakin set up the Red Cross Missing and Wounded Enquiry Bureau, which was instrumental in ascertaining information for families of the circumstances of those who were missing — through death, wounding or capture. Red Cross nurses, known as 'Blue Birds', served in French front line hospitals. Women such as Ranid MacPhillamy and Alice Chisholm set up canteens in Egypt, providing facilities for soldiers on leave.</p>
<p>Key statistics</p>	<p>416,809 Australians enlisted in World War I, of whom 331,781 served overseas. 61,720 of these died during the war, and 137,013 were wounded.</p> <p>In all, 2139 women served with the Australian Army Nursing Service, and 130 worked with the Queen Alexandra Imperial Military Nursing Service. A further 423 nurses served in hospitals in Australia. Twenty-three of these women died in service during the war.</p>

Map showing the main regions of the world where Australian servicemen and women served in this conflict



Based on JCR Cam and John McQuilton (eds), *Australians. A Historical Atlas*, Fairfax, Syme & Weldon Associates, Sydney, 1987. For detailed maps of Australian involvement see John Coates, *An Atlas of Australia's Wars*, Oxford University Press, Melbourne, 2006.

Forming ideas

Here are three images or representations of Australian nurses or medical personnel from World War I.



A Napier Waller, Australian War Memorial stained glass window, AWM ART90410.001



B *Nurse and patient, 3rd Australian CCS*, Frank Crozier, France, c.1918, oil on wood panel, 23.8 cm x 27.4 cm. AWM ART13338



C *The ministering angel*, Benjamin Edwin Minns, Sydney, 1918, 22.4 cm x 20.4 cm. AWM ART93103

1 If you only had these images to form opinions about Australian nurses during the war, what could you say about them?

You are about to investigate the roles and experiences of Australian women in World War I. The following resources will enable you to test the ideas that you have suggested.

IN YOUR INVESTIGATIONS you should draw on these components of the *Australian Women in War* resource:



UNIT 2 (pages 25–38)



DVD:
CHAPTER 2
World War I
CHAPTER 5
A Local Community



CD-ROM activities:

- What were Australian women's uniforms like over time?
- Create a National Australian Women's Memorial
- Create an Australian Women in War poster and timeline
- Create a recruiting or information poster
- Who was Effie Garden?
- Researching Australian nurses who died in World War I — Using primary source documents



What were the experiences of nurses and other medical workers during the war?

- 1 Look at **Chapter 2 of the DVD**. It will provide you with some information and ideas about how the displays in the Australian War Memorial show Australian women in World War I. They are a starting point for your investigations in this unit.
- 2 Study the sources below, which show a variety of experiences of Australian nurses during World War I. In the box after each source write individual words or short phrases that summarise your main ideas and reactions. Some examples have been done for Source 1 to help you.

Source 1

Sunday 25 April 1915 off Gallipoli

... About 9am my first patients from battlefield commenced to pour in (We had gone in during night & anchored outside Dardanelles). We wakened up & could plainly hear sounds of guns. They came in an endless stream, some walking holding arms, hands covered with blood, some on stretchers with broken legs, some shivering & collapsed through loss of blood & some with faces streaming with blood ... we went for the worst cases first & worked like fury while all the sound of firing was going on ... we took on board 570 wounded ... we filled every space, mattresses lying everywhere on deck ... in my ward I had 118 patients (one Turk badly wounded) ... we got to bed between 2 & 3 am.

Melanie Oppenheimer, *Australian Women and War*, Department of Veterans' Affairs, Canberra, 2008 p28

Worked hard
Witnessing great suffering
Extreme workload
Fatigue

Source 2

On Lemnos

Had a desperately hard time at Lemnos with food, tents, mud and sickness, as well as great troubles with Colonel Fiaschi, who treated Nurses shamefully — No consideration whatever ... I believe the Hospital would have collapsed but for the Nurses. They all worked like demons ...

Letter from RHJ Fetherston in Jan Bassett, *Guns and Brooches*, Oxford University Press, Melbourne, 1992 p50

Source 3

In India

Here I am on day duty, and Sister-in-Charge of two wards. Oh, these poor men from Mesopotamia! They are ... only skin and bone (men from the Kut campaign). This is amoebic dysentery, and treated with hyperdermic injections of "Emetin" ... most of the poor men are not long for this world ... Oh, Pete, the men with dysentery would make one weep! Why are men allowed to suffer like this? And we hear folk in Australia and England talking about boys who have made the "Supreme Sacrifice", and I suppose stone monuments etc, will be erected to their memory "of our glorious dead". What about the living? The blind, crippled, disfigured and those poor mad men and women.

Matron Babs Moberly, February 1917, in Melanie Oppenheimer, *Australian Women and War*, Department of Veterans' Affairs, Canberra, 2008 p32

Source 4

On Salonika

[Sister Gertrude Munro] was only ill for ten days ... was put straight into hospital for sick sisters where she got the very best medical attention possible, and ... one of her friends was constantly with her ... She had a bad combination, Pneumonia and M.T. Malaria which is very hard to fight. Being a strong healthy woman we hoped against hope she might win through, but alas it was not to be ... She is buried in a very pretty little Cemetery with some other Sisters and Soldiers who have given their lives for their country.

Jessie MacHardie White, 2 December 1918, Red Cross Wounded and Missing Enquiry Bureau files, AWM 1 DRL 428

Source 5

Gertrude Moberley, reaction at the end of the war

Blood! Blood! I am very tired. Oh dear God, how dreadfully tired, and broken-hearted too.

Jan Bassett, *Guns and Brooches*, Oxford University Press, Melbourne, 1992 p63

Source 6**Sister Aileen Lucas writing from 1 Australian General Hospital tent hospital in France, 1917**

The river was frozen ... The water pipes burst, and we could not get any water for some time, not even to wash the patients... Here we received the casualties straight from the field, some very severely wounded, and feeling the cold very greatly. A great number of them had trench feet and frost-bite. Several patients were frozen to death in the ambulances coming down to us.

Jan Bassett, *Guns and Brooches*, Oxford University Press, Melbourne, 1992, p56

Source 8**In a ward for the blinded**

We had to describe the pictures to them, they enjoyed the music and their tea ... the boys will remember the many musicians who came to cheer them up ... the Red Cross supplied comforts and how the boys enjoyed the hot soup and dainties but even that did not compensate for loss of limbs, health and careers.

Sister Alice Cocking in Rupert Goodman, *Queensland Nurses – Boer War to Vietnam, Brisbane, 1985* p92

Source 10**Sister Mabel Brown writing from a hospital in Belgium during the influenza epidemic that hit at the end of the war, 1918–1919**

I was alone in [a] ward of 22 beds all pneumonia, mostly mad, and had about 3 deaths in every 24 hours. I was there [in that ward] 3 weeks without relief for one hour. The depression which settled on one watching these men die in spite of all you did for them was awful.

Jan Bassett, *Guns and Brooches*, Oxford University Press, Melbourne, 1992 p38

Source 7**Sister Alice Ross King writing about experiencing an artillery barrage at a Casualty Clearing Station at Messines in 1917**

(During this attack four sisters received Military Medals for their bravery during the night.)

... I could hear nothing for the roar of the planes and the artillery. I seemed to be the only living thing about ... I kept calling for the orderly to help me and thought he was finking, but the poor boy had been blown to bits ... I had my right arm under a leg which I thought was [a patient's she was trying to help] but when I lifted I found to my horror that it was a loose leg with a boot ... on it. One of the orderly's legs which had been blown off and had landed on the patient's bed. Next day they found the trunk up a tree about twenty yards away.

Jan Bassett, *Guns and Brooches*, Oxford University Press, Melbourne, 1992 p63 - 64

Source 9**In a ward for the shell-shocked**

One realises what the horrors of war must be like to reduce such fine men to this state. One aged 26 is just like a child, learning to talk again. He's very bright, you can't exactly call him mental but his condition never improves. It's pathetic to see the toys and picture books on his locker ... I never did like working with mentals, for it takes so much out of me. I feel like a piece of chewed string after duty ... Shell shock is fearful, worse than death.

Sister Evelyn Davies in Marianne Baker, *Nightingales in the Mud*, Allen and Unwin, Sydney, 1989 p160

Source 11**In a Casualty Clearing Station**

... all the big cases came pouring in, and we had 1800 men and only twenty-four sisters ... The men were sent down with only their field dressings ... We were bombed every night on and off and that made our work doubly hard, as some of the patients were very difficult to control in their weak state.

Jan Bassett, *Guns and Brooches*, Oxford University Press, Melbourne, 1992 p58

Source 12

Nursing in 1AAH in Britain

All my boys are either winged or legs off, shoulders blown away, big head wounds, but nearly all healed up and just little pieces of dead bone keeping them from healing up altogether. They are such fine fellows. Some have only had 12 operations.

We are getting more stumps every day and now have about 300 without legs and arms.

I have about 30 leg stumps to dress every morning and about 40 beds to make. The orderly helps me but it is an awful rush.

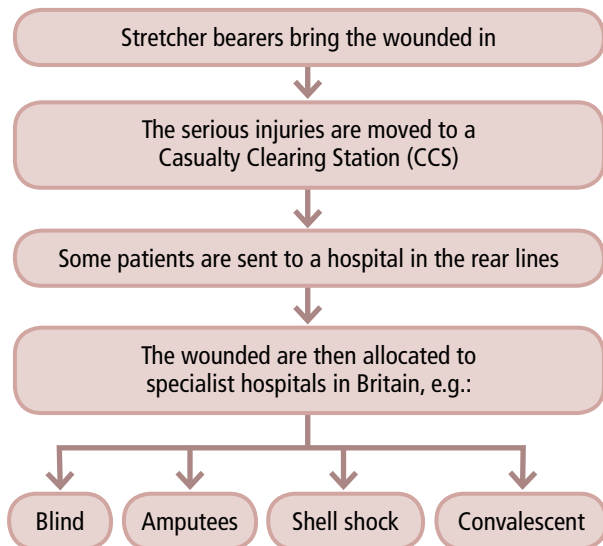
One of the nurses is to be married in the morning from here and Matron is giving her a morning tea. All the boys are standing with an archway of crutches on their one leg!

I am sorry for Australia for it will be nothing but broken down men after the war.

Sister Queenie Avenell, in Rupert Goodman, *Queensland Nurses – Boer War to Vietnam*, Brisbane, Boolarong Publications, 1985 p91



3 Here is a simplified diagram of the stages of moving wounded men from the front line. Try to identify a quotation from Sources 1–12 that matches each of the stages shown. Write the source number beside the stage.



4 Source 13 on pages 32–34 is a set of photographs showing various aspects of nursing, in various places. Cut some or all of these out and arrange them in a scrapbook. Match one of the quotes in Sources 1–12 to each photograph as though it is a caption to that photograph, or as if it is the comments created by the nurse for her scrapbook. You can create this in PowerPoint format as an alternative.

Source 13(a)

Photographic evidence



A Australian Red Cross Voluntary Aid Detachment members in uniform and wearing protective clothing for nursing influenza victims. AWM P01102.021



B The burial of a young soldier. AWM P05412.001



C In an operating theatre. AWM P01908.026



D A group of blind Australian soldiers at St Dunstan's Hospital. AWM H18889

Source 13(b)



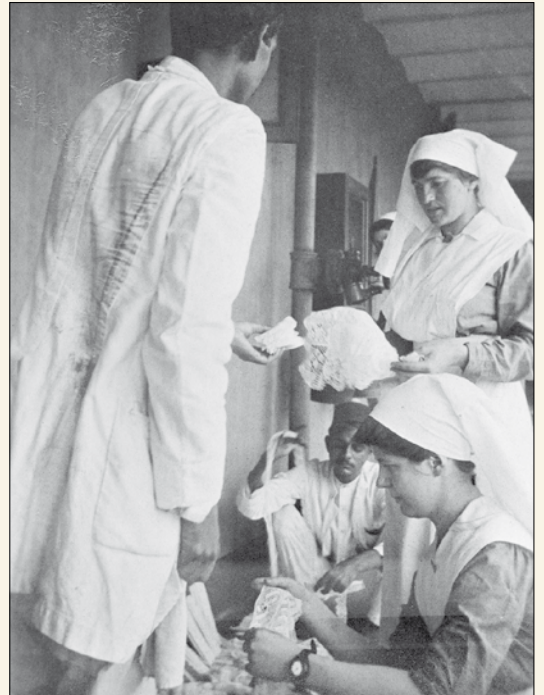
E Nurses' quarters 2nd Australian General Hospital, France. AWM P02402.022



G Amputees and their artificial limbs. AWM P00162.016



I A barge transporting wounded soldiers from Gallipoli to a hospital ship. AWM A02740



F Two Australian nurses in a hospital in Bombay, India. AWM P02523.004



H Four nurses at 1AAH, Harefield, England. AWM P02402.012



J Matron (Margaret) Grace Wilson on Lemnos, Greece. AWM A05332

Source 13(c)



K Staff Nurse Pearl Corkhill receives the Military Medal. AWM P01850.006



L 2nd Australian Casualty Clearing Station, France. AWM P00156.072



M A ward in the 2nd Australian Casualty Clearing Station, France. AWM E04623



N Nurses wearing mosquito protection, Salonica, Greece. AWM H15761



O On leave in London. AWM H15635



P Grave of Staff Nurse Beatrice Middleton Watson, Ismailia, Egypt. AWM C02303

- 5** We think of dangers for soldiers in war, but what about the nurses? What dangers existed for the nurses in World War I?
- 6** What do you think would have been the best and worst aspects of life for nurses during the war?
- 7** What would you say was the significance of the nursing role in the war?

How were women involved in the war on the home front? Was this involvement unifying or divisive?

One way of exploring women's roles and contributions in the war is to look at aspects of women's activities in a country area during the war. One historian, John McQuilton, has studied an area in the north-east of Victoria. Here are some of his findings.

- 1 Look at the list and identify the types of activities that women were involved in during the war — such as voluntary activities; fundraising; patriotic activities; political activities; employment activities. Write the type of activity beside each.
- 2 Decide which of the activities might unite a community, and which might divide it. Write this beside each activity.
- 3 Create a statement that summarises women's activities and roles on the home front.
- 4 How significant were women's activities on the home front? You can consider their significance for the war effort, and also for the status of women in the community.



God bless dear Daddy, Norman Lindsay, Sydney, Australia, c.1914-18, 47 cm x 38 cm. AWM ARTV05469

- Women were active in both the pro- and anti-case during the bitter conscription campaigns of 1916 and 1917.
- Some women were thrust into public roles during the war.
- Some women broke gender employment barriers, by replacing enlisted men in such areas as bank teller and shire clerk.
- Most women had not changed their occupational status at the end of the war, and continued to be employed in traditionally female occupations.
- Women formed Red Cross branches and worked tirelessly in voluntary activities to support the soldiers.
- The volume of good produced and the personal efforts involved 'beggared the imagination'. One example — by the war's end the Red Cross society of Rutherglen had forwarded 1233 shirts, 8512 pairs of underpants, 1233 pairs of pyjamas, 2405 pairs of socks, 76 sheets, 776 pillow-cases, 455 bed screens, 391 handkerchiefs and 'numerous other items'. The shirts, underpants, socks and pillow cases alone accounted for 30,100 hours of work.
- Red Cross and other volunteers packed billies for soldiers at Christmas time, met troop trains with sandwiches and tea for the travelling soldiers, baked cakes for local training camps and hospitals.
- Women organised fundraising activities.
- They organised touring concert parties to raise funds — the 'Royal Patriots', the 'Win-the-War-Girls', the 'Advance Guard', and 'Our Girls at Home'.
- Some women put great pressure on men to enlist, and refused to go out with eligible men who had not volunteered.
- Some women sent white feathers, the symbol of cowardice, to local men in the community. One man wrote in a letter to the local newspaper that 'Some old tart ... has posted me some White Leghorn Plumage. Little does she know that I have been turned down for various defects including hammer toe and varicose veins.'
- Some women were pressured to force their men to enlist, to 'send their sons, brothers and sweethearts to war and to shun the shirker and poltroon' [those who were too scared or not noble enough to volunteer].
- Some women encouraged their men not to enlist.
- The most common stereotypes of 'the patriotic woman' were those women who worked tirelessly for nation and Empire, the nurse at the front, and the soldier's mother.
- One woman committed suicide when her son returned from the war physically and mentally maimed.
- School girls were encouraged to raise money for patriotic funds — they raffled geese, sold pet lambs, gathered and sold vegetables from their gardens, knitted and made cakes.
- School boys and girls were used in patriotic processions.

From John McQuilton, *Rural Australia and the Great War*, Melbourne University Press, 2001, passim



What were the continuing impacts of war after 1918?

The previous investigations in this unit have introduced two key ideas: that nurses played a significant role in the war; and that on the home front there was both unity and division associated with women's roles.

Look at this information on nurses following their war service and decide what happened.

Source 1

Ella Tucker, application for a war pension in 1920

After return from Active Service I had 12 months' holiday because I felt unable to work, really a general depression after 4 3/4 years' continual strain; I have hardly had a good night's sound sleep since my return.

Jan Bassett, *Guns and Brooches*, Oxford University Press, Melbourne, 1992, p99

Source 2

Winifred Smith, applying for a pension in 1924

I have not been well since demobilization, having contracted Pneumonic Influenza whilst nursing troops (voluntarily) on SS Marathon on Voyage to Australia Oct 1918 to Jan 1919, & have been in indifferent health since ... my Husband is an Anzac who was incapacitated on Gallipoli [sic] & later served in France. He is partially incapacitated receiving a small pension ... altho' in poor health I did not wish for a pension from the A.I.F. as we thought our circumstances would be comfortable, returning to Australia we found things very changed & the continual ill health of my Husband & myself has drained our slender resources.

Jan Bassett, *Guns and Brooches*, Oxford University Press, Melbourne, 1992, p103

- 1 What do Sources 1–2 suggest about the continuing impact of the war on nurses?

During the war some women had taken on paid work for the first time. Did this continue? Look at these statistics on women's employment.

- 2 List the five main areas of employment of women in 1911. Give an example of a job that might be typical of each of the five areas.
- 3 The recorded female population of Australia in 1911 was 2,141,970. What percentage of this population was employed?

Source 3

An historian reflects

Wartime experience had a lasting impact on many of the nurses. Nearly twenty per cent were declared medically unfit on discharge. Nurses were eligible for pensions, but at a rate which was less than the equivalent male rank. Like many soldiers, some nurses found it very difficult to settle back into civilian life after the stress of war. Nurses remained single at a higher rate than women generally, yet continued to earn lower rates of pay than male equivalents, yet they often were supporting dependent relatives. Many nurses who did marry married incapacitated soldiers, again adding to the problems they faced as bread-winners in a family. 'Governments had paid lightly for the First World War nurses' service. Most of the nurses, on the other hand, had paid a heavy price for their wartime experiences.' ... Yet many of the AIF nurses went into responsible and influential posts within their profession, and continued to provide role models of the highest standard. When 20 years after the end of the First World War Vera Hamilton went off as an army nurse in the Second World War, she remembered that she had joined army nursing because she was 'Young & Patriotic and my Matron was ex Army 1st World War'.

Jan Bassett, *Guns and Brooches*, Oxford University Press, Melbourne, pp107, 110

Source 4

Occupational distribution of Australian female workforce 1911–1933

Occupational area	1911	1921	1933
Upper professional	3,159	5,644	2,815
Graziers, wheat and sheep farmers	1,214	1,148	3,988
Lower professional	38,933	50,598	70,059
Managerial	12,261	8,314	10,188
Self-employed shop proprietors	5,021	7,032	15,141
Other farmers	13,099	6,364	11,122
Clerical and related workers	9,637	32,750	91,539
Armed services and police force	0	31	31
Craftsmen and foremen	88,531	85,144	53,997
Shop assistants	26,381	37,743	50,760
Operatives and process workers	11,177	20,508	57,597
Drivers	719	1,276	1,481
Personal, domestic & other service workers	148,170	160,954	197,752
Miners	57	0	0
Farm and rural workers	708	1,830	4,006
Labourers	4,039	10,379	12,511
Not known	4,751	6,686	16,081
Total workforce	368,457	436,567	599,068

- 4 List the five main areas of employment of women in 1921.
- 5 The recorded female population of Australia in 1921 was 2,672,864. What percentage of this population was employed?
- 6 Look at the figures for 1911–1933. Describe the trends you identify.
- 7 Does the war seem to have interrupted or changed the trends? Justify your answer.

Historians argue that the war provided a powerful sense of national identity.

- 8 During the 1920s and 1930s Australia developed the Anzac tradition that had begun in 1915 and that we still observe today. The war was fought mainly by men, so the tradition is mainly about men's behaviour. Do you think women of the period could identify with the Anzac tradition that was developing? Explain your ideas.

But was the sense of Australian identity that came out of the war really able to provide a social 'glue' that bound people together? Here is a reminiscence of an Australian writer's childhood in the 1920s and 1930s. It provides a view of the Anzac tradition as divisive, as well as unifying.

- 9 What do you think were the main impacts of the war on women into the 1920s and 1930s?
- 10 Source 6 shows images depicting aspects of women's involvement in World War I. After looking at these and reflecting on the other evidence you have now seen, write a brief paragraph that summarises Australian women's involvement and roles in the war, the significance of their contributions, and the impact of the war on women's status in society.

Source 5

Growing up in the 1920s and 1930s

We children of the nineteen-twenties and thirties ... were the generation whose fathers, uncles, and sometimes elder brothers were either dead, or 'returned' men ... We grew up in a wrenching dichotomy of deep pride and bewildering discomfort; we lived in a world of proud April days when we wore our fathers' medals to school, in moments of thrilling, chilling excitement as the Last Post died away, the bugle silenced, and we stood with bowed heads beneath our family names on the ugly stone memorial in our little towns ...

We lived in a world where men were called 'Hoppy', 'Wingy', 'Shifty', 'Gunner', 'Stumpy', 'Deafy', 'Hooky', according to whether they lost a leg, an arm (or part of one), an eye, their hearing, or had a disfigured face drawn by rough surgery into a leer ...

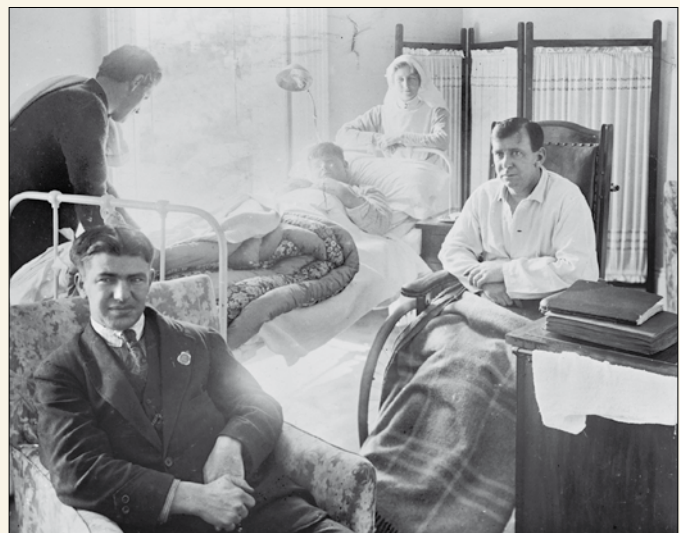
And we listened through the thin walls when our parents came home from visiting a 'returned' uncle in hospital: 'I can't stand it. I can't go again.' It is mother. Your father's voice comes, strangled, like hers. 'You'll be alright.' 'No, but the smell. When he coughs ... and breathes out ... it's ... oh, I'm going to be sick.' But she goes back next Sunday and the next until the day you go to school with a black rosette on your lapel, and the flag is flying half-mast for your Uncle Dick who was gassed.

You are small, and you go into a room unexpectedly, at night, because something has disturbed you when you are visiting Grandmother and she, that fierce little old lady, is kneeling on the floor, her face turned up to the family portrait taken in 1914, and you know she is praying for Jack, the beautiful boy, and Stephen, the laughing roly-poly, her sons, who were 'missing' at Lone Pine, August 1915, although she never mentions it to a living soul. (Except the night World War II was declared and she suddenly says, 'Wouldn't it be funny if they found the boys wandering round – and they got their memories back!') And none of us look at her.)

You are sent to take soup to a family down on their luck during the depression. You hate going: once you saw the husband's leg being 'aired' when you entered without their hearing your knock, and you tried to avoid him ever after, and sometimes took the soup home and lied to your mother, 'they were not home', rather than smell that smell again. And the hook instead of a hand, the 'Stumpy' in a wheel chair; one man even skating along on a little trolley, his hands taking the place of his absent legs; the man who shook and trembled and the other one who stuttered from 'shell shock' and regularly had to be 'put away'.

They were the flotsam and jetsam of war but no one told you. This is what the world is, was all your child's mind knew; we had no way of knowing that it was the world only for some of us.

Patsy Adam-Smith, *The Anzacs*, Penguin, Melbourne, 1991, pp2-4



Patients with a nurse in Anzac Hospital. AWM H12889

Source 6

Some other images of women's involvement in the war



A British war brides and their children on the way to Australia. AWM P01908.032



B Olive May (Kelso) King, an Australian who drove her ambulance with Serbian troops in Europe. AWM P01352.002

C A badge issued by the Department of Defence to mothers who had sons serving in the war. AWM REL/11143



D Women making uniforms at the Commonwealth Clothing Factory. AWM DAX2294



E Women wait to welcome loved ones home from the war. AWM H11576



F Volunteer Red Cross workers packing parcels to be sent to troops at the front. AWM J00346



G



H

Two conscription leaflets. AWM RC00320 (G); AWM RC00336 (H)