

TOPIC 10: After the War

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

When the fighting ceased, the Australian Imperial Force (AIF) was once again making its way to the front line on the Western Front. At Compiègne, near Paris, the Germans signed an armistice with the Allies — French, British, Americans, Belgians — which brought hostilities to a close at 11 am on 11 November 1918. By the terms of the armistice, the German army retreated beyond the Rhine River and handed over thousands of pieces of war equipment, including machine-guns and artillery pieces. But the end of the fighting was not the official end of the war. That only occurred after lengthy peace negotiations held in Paris between the warring states and the victorious Allies in the first half of 1919.

Australia was represented at the negotiations in Paris by Prime Minister William Morris 'Billy' Hughes and the Minister for the Navy, Joseph Cook. Hughes ensured that Australia was given the administration of German New Guinea, captured by Australian forces in 1914, and the Pacific island of Nauru. Opposed by American President Woodrow Wilson with comments that Hughes represented only five million people, Hughes responded that he represented 60,000 Australian dead — virtually half of the American total, from a country with a far smaller population. On 28 June 1919, Hughes and Cook, along with all the other Allied leaders, signed the Versailles Peace Treaty with the new German Republic. This was the first international treaty that the Commonwealth of Australia signed in its own right.

Throughout 1919, hundreds of steamships brought the men and women of the first AIF home to Australia. There they did their best to reintegrate into civilian life, although many thousands remained permanently and physically scarred by the war. In 1917, the Commonwealth had set up a Repatriation Commission to look after war veterans and the families of those who had been killed. Ex-servicemen's organisations such as the Returned Sailors and Soldiers Imperial League of Australia (today known as the Returned & Services League or RSL) were also founded at this time to look after the interests of war veterans. In 1938, twenty years after the end of the war, apart from ordinary Service Pensions, Australia had 77,315 'war disability' pensioners, whose war-related problems ranged from 'war neurosis' (3,328) to those suffering the aftermath of gunshot wounds (29,491).

But the end of the fighting was not the official end of the war. That only occurred after lengthy peace negotiations ... in the first half of 1919.

AIMS

Students at Level 1/2/3:	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Know that there were physical and mental problems for many men and women on their return• Appreciate that repatriation efforts were provided by the government• Empathise with the problems faced by many soldiers and their families
Students at Level 2/3:	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Critically analyse some of the main impacts of the war on Australian society

CLASSROOM STRATEGIES

Level 1/2/3	<p>A key concept here is for students to ask: did Australian society owe a duty of care to the returning soldiers and nurses?</p> <p>A way of helping students start to think about this is to ask: there are Australian servicemen and women overseas today, on active service on behalf of Australia. Does Australia owe them any special duty today?</p>
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AWM A03281

A group of women and children rejoicing in the street at the signing of the Armistice.



AWM P00308.012

When the war ended the soldiers and nurses went home. But there would be problems to face, and changes.

Here are two photographs showing families ready to welcome home their soldiers who have been away for several years.

- Imagine some things that they might be thinking, or that they might say to the soldiers when they see them.



AWM H11576

- Imagine that these are the soldiers. What might their feelings be about returning home?



AWM H16140



AWM D00571

- Do you think that Australia would be the same after the soldiers returned, or would it be different? Explain your ideas.

War can involve both change and continuity in a society.

- 1) Look at the following information. For each one decide what impacts, if any, each might have on that society. You can consider a variety of possible areas of impact — economic, social, political — at a variety of levels — personal, family, community, state-wide, national, international.

Draw up a table like this to summarise your ideas:

Possible impacts	What was done in Australia

SOLDIER SETTLEMENT

In the soldier settlement scheme the government provided loans and land to returned soldiers to establish farms, usually in newly opened areas.

Mum had come up on that night's train and she was with us on the cart. We brought a single bed out, some tucker and all that, it was a full load. She was dead-dog tired. I remember we stuck the single bed down and let her get on it and she went dead to the world ... There was a clump of ti-tree bushes growing about a hundred yards from the front and we dumped all our gear there ... We lived in the tent ... in this ti-tree thicket ... we put up a galvanised iron humpy with an iron fireplace ... where mum did the cooking ... all we had was a single bed in this tent.

(Quoted in Clem Lloyd and Jacqui Rees, *The Last Shilling*, Melbourne University Press, 1994, page 222)



Cartoon by David Low. First published in *The Bulletin*, 23 January 1919.

THE INJURED

The fury of war was so appalling that it was expected that there would be returning a very large number of men too injured to be useful in any but the very lightest kinds of work. Events were to show, however, that the number, though large, was, fortunately, nothing nearly so great as was feared. Perhaps one of the most noticeable features of post-war history has been the fortitude and stamina displayed by the very many of the Australians, who, though much injured, returned to work and carried on without help from the country.

(Quoted in Clem Lloyd and Jacqui Rees, *The Last Shilling*, page 212)

Have you ever seen a man possessed of devils? A man who by day or night, sleeping or waking, talking, or weeping will never know a moment's rest until he dies? — A man whose tongue shoots out, whose knee shoots up, whose giant hand shoots forward, whose hand jumps about like a sort of gigantic parched pea? Have you ever seen a shell-shock case?

(Quoted in Clem Lloyd and Jacqui Rees, *The Last Shilling*, page 201)



AWM H11709

Disabled veterans attending the Australian Red Cross Society's workshop.



AWM P01331.006

The Anzac Hostel in Brighton, Victoria, was opened in 1919 for the use of incapacitated soldiers.

JOBS

The Repatriation Department was responsible for training men who had been disabled by the war. There were three types:

- those men who would never be able to work; these were to be helped by permanent hospital or hostel accommodation;
- those men who could do some work, but would never be able to compete against fully able workers; these were to be helped to gain skills in sheltered occupations;
- those men who would eventually be able to work at full efficiency; these men were to be helped with vocational training to give them the required skills.

(Based on Clem Lloyd and Jacqui Rees, *The Last Shilling*, page 147)

NATIONAL IDENTITY AND LIFE



AWM P01908.032

Wives and children of Australian soldiers return to Australia on the ship *Zealandia*.



AWM ART 16770

The signing of the treaty of peace at Versailles, 28 June 1919. Australian Prime Minister William Morris Hughes was one of the international parties to sign this treaty.

REPATRIATION ASSISTANCE

By the late 1930s:

- 257,000 Australians being assisted by a war pension
- 3,600 receiving service pensions
- 1,600 men still in hostels and homes for the permanently incapacitated
- 23,000 outpatients in repatriations hospitals each year
- 20,000 children had received educational assistance
- 21,000 homes built
- 4,000 artificial limbs fitted
- 133,000 jobs found for returned servicemen
- 28,000 had undergone training courses
- 40,000 placed on the land

The cost of this was just under one-fifth of all Commonwealth expenditure.

(Stephen Garton, *The Cost of War: Australians Return*, Oxford University Press, New York, 1996, pages 83-4)



Courtesy of Robert Lewis

A war service home in Melbourne. Streets in this area include such war-related names as Gallipoli, Peronne, Vaux, Heliopolis and Gezireh.

PERSONAL EXPERIENCES AND ATTITUDES

THE WOUNDED MAN SPEAKS

I left an ear in a dug-out
 When a shell hit made us dance
 And at Belleau Wood where mixing was good
 I gave up a mitt [hand] for France ...

They certainly spoiled my beauty
 And my leg is a twisted curse
 They busted me up like a mangled pup
 But — THEY DID NOT BUST MY NERVE

And no pussy-footing sissy
 Shall grab my one good hand ...
 Just to make himself feel grand
 For I'm damned if I'll be a hero
 And I ain't a helpless slob
 After what I've stood, what is left is good
 And all I want is — A JOB

(Quoted in Stephen Garton, *The Cost of War: Australians Return*, pages 106-7)

In 1938 a Victorian doctor reported:

A very strong impression ... that very many children present a problem in behaviour ... traceable to ... the state of tension existing in the household, usually owing to the lack of complete harmony and co-operation between the parents ... in many cases attributable to ... a nervous irritability or instability of the husband traceable to war service ... I fully realise the terrible effects of the Great War on the physical, nervous and mental condition of the soldiers ... it would be almost impossible to exaggerate the tragic effects of war on the health, happiness and prosperity of the whole community. There is no doubt that those who served and their immediate relations bore the brunt of the strain and will carry the effects to their graves.

(Quoted in Stephen Garton, *The Cost of War: Australians Return*, pages 204-5)

A GRATEFUL SOCIETY?

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*, Nelson, Melbourne, 1978, pages 2-7, with permission of Penguin Group Australia Ltd.)

Letter from William Cooper, Aboriginal activist, 1933, to the Australian Government:

I am father of a soldier who gave his life for his King on the battlefield and thousands of coloured men enlisted in the AIF. They will doubtless do so again though on their return last time, that is those that survived, were pushed back to the bush to resume the status of aboriginals ... the aboriginal now has no status, no rights, no land, and ... nothing to fight for but the privilege of defending the land which was taken from him by the white race without compensation or even kindness. We submit that to put us in the trenches, until we have something to fight for, is not right. My point ... is that the enlistment of [Aborigines] should be preceded by the removal of all disabilities. Then, with a country to fight for, the aborigines would not be one whit behind white men in value.

(Alick Jackomos and Derek Fowell, *Forgotten Heroes*, Victoria Press, Melbourne, 1993, pages 9-10)