
CHAPTER

1

Defending Australia

On the night of 3 September 1939, Australians listened to their wireless sets as their Prime Minister, Robert Menzies, told them in solemn tones that, as a consequence of Germany's invasion of Poland, Britain had declared war upon Germany and that, as a result, Australia was also at war. Between that moment and the surrender of Japan six years later, over 850,000 Australians had served their country in one or other of the armed services. Although it is difficult to give exact figures, it is estimated that over 3000 of that number were Aborigines and Torres Strait Islanders.¹

By 1939, Australia's Aboriginal population numbered about 80,000 Aborigines and 'part-Aborigines' while Torres Strait Islanders numbered about 5000.² By comparison, the white Australian population numbered about seven million. Therefore, black Australians represented less than one per cent of the total Australian population — hardly a manpower pool of significant size in military terms. But of more military significance was their distribution. The bulk of the white Australian population was located in the cities and towns of south-east Australia. Even in the sparsely populated north, most whites lived in isolated urban communities like Darwin, Broome or Wyndham. The distribution of

2 Fighters from the Fringe

the Aboriginal and Islander population was the reverse of this. Most Aborigines and Islanders lived in north Australia, and everywhere, even in the white dominated south-east, black Australians were predominantly rural. By June 1941, over 13,000 Aborigines and 'part-Aborigines' were estimated to be in supervised camps — mission stations and government-run Aboriginal settlements — in Western Australia, the Northern Territory and Queensland, the three 'frontier' States. A further 23,000 were estimated to live a traditional 'nomadic' lifestyle.³ While Aborigines in the south-east were de-tribalised, those in the north ranged across the spectrum of adaptation to white social values from the completely de-tribalised to enclaves of tribal Aborigines who had had little exposure to white Australians.

On the eve of the Second World War Aborigines occupied a position on the margins of white Australian society. In New South Wales, Victoria and South Australia, Aborigines and 'part-Aborigines' could be enrolled to vote in State elections. But in the 'frontier' States of Queensland, Western Australia and the Northern Territory, where most of the Aboriginal and Islander population lived, access to the vote was very limited. Usually, only those individuals who had been granted an exemption from the relevant State Aborigines Act were eligible to vote. Exemptions were granted only if individuals severed their tribal associations — in effect, renouncing their Aboriginality — so, very few Aborigines had the vote in these States.

In Commonwealth elections, no Aborigine could vote, but 'part-Aborigines' who had abandoned their Aboriginality to live as whites, could. To add a further complication, any Aborigine or 'part-Aborigine' who was entitled to vote in a State election was also entitled automatically to a vote in Commonwealth elections. These complex rules had come about as a result of individual State governments retaining control over Aboriginal affairs despite repeated efforts by Aboriginal political organisations to have this responsibility vested with the Commonwealth. The Commonwealth government was responsible only for those Aborigines in the Northern Territory.

The various State Aboriginals Acts forced upon Aboriginals a wide range of paternalistic controls over many aspects of their lives including their employment, movements, income, consumption of alcohol and sexual relations.⁴ While Aboriginals in the more populated areas endured petty racism and a social caste system which prevented them from effectively advancing their position, those in more remote parts where the racist values of the frontier still pervaded the Australian psyche were not immune from racist violence. On 8 November 1928, the *Sydney Morning Herald*

Below: Long before the Second World War Aboriginals were employed by Navy ships surveying the north Australian coast. HMAS *Geranium* began the employment of six Aboriginals as civilian labourers in 1923, and HMAS *Moresby* continued the employment of Aboriginals from 1934 to 1940. The men were usually engaged from Darwin and their job was to assist shore-based patrols in the erection of survey markers and in contacts with the local Aboriginals of the north Australian coast. They were paid five shillings a week with rations, and were issued second-hand clothing. As this photograph shows, they wore Navy hats and ribbons. These unidentified sailors appear to be proudly displaying their wages. It is possible that one of these men is Micky Geranium, so named for his lengthy employment by the Navy aboard HMAS *Geranium* during these peacetime survey operations. (Photo courtesy AIATSIS).



4 Fighters from the Fringe

published news of what later became known as the Coniston massacre. A central Australian police patrol, led by Constable Murray, the local 'Protector of Aborigines', admitted to the killing of seventeen Aborigines as a reprisal for the killing of a white dogger. Later, an inquiry into the incident found that 31 Aborigines had been killed⁵ and rumours circulated that as many as 70 may have died. Though the Coniston massacre was a spectacular example of frontier violence, it stood as a prominent feature in a landscape of petty violence against northern Aborigines which continued into the 1940s. White employers of Aboriginal labour often regarded violence as a useful and necessary technique for controlling their workers.⁶ The Western Australian government also condoned the use of violence by missionaries. In 1943, the Western Australian Commissioner for Native Affairs, H.I. Bray, supported a missionary who had slapped and punched a male Aborigine who was 'neglectful in his work' saying, 'I honestly believe in chastisement and corporal punishment for natives and even agree that it is often necessary with adult natives, both male and female'.⁷

A result of the decentralisation of Aboriginal affairs to State and Federal governments was that the legal status of Aborigines varied from State to State; even the definition of 'Aborigines' was not uniform. However, despite differences in detailed application, the broad thrust of Aboriginal policies was similar. Following a decline in the Aboriginal population in the late nineteenth century and bolstered by notions of social Darwinism, it had become widely accepted that the 'full-blood' Aboriginal population would die out and that the 'part-Aboriginal' population would be absorbed into the white community. Government policies tended to support this popular idea and aimed not at positive policies for the future of Aborigines but merely at 'smoothing the dying pillow'; Aborigines were to be permitted to die out with dignity, and reservations on which the Aboriginal race would spend its last days were provided. By the turn of the century this policy had already begun to lose support, but it was not until 1939 that a new Federal government policy was

announced. The new policy rejected the idea that Aborigines would die out. Instead, it envisaged that Aborigines would eventually assimilate into the white community. Though the policy was to fail because it mistakenly assumed that Aborigines wanted to adopt the trappings of white culture, it was, at least, a far more humane policy than its predecessor. The new assimilation policy was supported to varying degrees by the State governments.

On the eve of the Second World War, therefore, both the armed forces and black Australians faced difficult choices. Expanding in preparation for the war, the Army, Navy and Air Force faced the problem of whether or not to admit black Australians to service. This dilemma called for service policy-makers to balance what they believed to be commonly held social attitudes towards Aborigines and Islanders, government policy which had only recently called for the integration of blacks into the white community — presumably, including the armed forces (although the assimilation policy did not specifically state this) — and their own beliefs about the degree of social instability permissible in military forces about to go to war. For Aborigines and Islanders, the dilemma revolved around the extent to which they would support a nation which had marginalised them and which had calmly condoned violence towards them. They could argue that citizenship carried both benefits and responsibilities. Since they were denied many of the benefits of citizenship should they not reject their responsibility to defend the nation?

Aborigines in the First World War

In the First World War, many Aborigines had resolved this dilemma by accepting their share of responsibility for national defence. Over 300 Aborigines and Islanders had served despite the existence of formal legislative barriers to the service of non-Europeans.⁸ Some displayed outstanding courage in battle. Corporal Albert Knight, a 'part-Aborigine' from Bourke, New South Wales, won the Distinguished Conduct Medal in September 1918

when he moved forward through enemy fire to locate machine-gun nests and trench mortars which were holding up the advance of his battalion, the 43rd.⁹ Private William Reginald Rawlings, a 'full-blood' from Purnim, Victoria, won the Military Medal at Morlancourt, France, on the night of 28–29 July 1918 when, as first bayonet man in a raiding party sent to clear an enemy trench system, he ruthlessly killed many of the enemy.¹⁰ Yet another Aborigine to win an award for bravery was Corporal Harry Thorpe, a 'part-Aborigine' from Orbost in Victoria. In October 1917 he had been involved in mopping-up operations near Ypres, leading his men against strong German resistance.¹¹ Neither Thorpe nor Rawlings survived the war.

Although hundreds more served without achieving the distinction of Knight, Rawlings or Thorpe, their acceptance of the responsibilities of citizenship had not moved either State or Federal governments to extend the full benefits of citizenship to the Aboriginal community. In fact, the inter-war period marked the high tide of repressive legislation for Aborigines. Aboriginal servicemen found that land previously set aside for Aboriginal reserves was resumed for issue to white ex-servicemen through the soldier settlement scheme. By 1930, as the Great Depression struck and governments came under pressure to cut costs, life on reserves and missions became even harder and those who had left the reserves to search for work were denied unemployment relief.

The Second World War

The service of Aborigines and Islanders in the First World War and the introduction of the assimilation policy, suggested that Aborigines and Islanders might be more freely admitted to service in the Second World War. Many Australians seemed to think so. Even before the outbreak of the Second World War suggestions were being put to the government for the employment of Aborigines in the Army. These came from a wide range of sources including private individuals, Aboriginal political organisations, branches of the Returned Sailors', Soldiers' and Airmen's Imperial

League of Australia¹² and the State Premier of New South Wales,¹³ suggesting support for the idea across a significant range of the community. But despite this pressure, and the exemplary service of many Aborigines in the First World War, the Army was reluctant to admit Aborigines.

Below: Bill Ferguson, an outspoken advocate of Aboriginal advancement and President of the Aborigines' Progressive Association, argued persuasively throughout the war that Aboriginal military service should entitle Aborigines to the full benefits of citizenship. He and other Aboriginal political advocates were partially successful in this campaign. By the war's end Aborigines who had served in the Army, Navy or Air Force were entitled to the vote in Federal elections, but the granting of the vote to the Aboriginal community as a whole and the extension of other social benefits to Aborigines had to wait until the 1950s and 1960s. The soldier on the right is P. Murray, the soldier on the left is unidentified. (Photo courtesy AIATSIS).



8 Fighters from the Fringe

Aboriginal political organisations had begun to appear in the early 1930s.¹⁴ By the late 1930s, organisations like the Aborigines' Advancement League, the Aborigines' Uplift Society, the Australian Aborigines' League and the Aborigines' Progressive Association had emerged to give at least partial form to Aboriginal political aspirations. During the Depression, the Australian Aborigines' League and the Aborigines' Progressive Association joined forces to become the most powerful of the Aboriginal political organisations, but, even so, this coalition struggled to make significant headway against white Australians' indifference to Aboriginal aspirations.¹⁵ Major conventional political parties and trade unions, whose constituents were overwhelmingly white, generally ignored Aboriginal issues.¹⁶ While the issue of Aboriginal military service was therefore important to Aboriginal political organisations as a means of achieving a measure of credibility, it was politically safe for the armed forces to ignore demands for the admission of Aborigines.

Immediately following Australia's entry into the war on 3 September 1939, Aborigines and Torres Strait Islanders began to enlist. The very next day the Army accepted the enlistment of 50 Northern Territory Aborigines and 'part-Aborigines' into the Militia, including Jimma and Samuel Fejo and William Muir. But this did not represent an 'open door' to Aborigines who aspired to defend their country. Special arrangements involving the personal intervention of the Minister for Defence had been necessary before the Army agreed to admit these men. The Fejo brothers were noted trackers and later in the war assisted with the rescue of Allied airmen shot down over the Northern Territory. William Muir transferred to the Second AIF in November 1942 and eventually reached the rank of Corporal.¹⁷

Despite the early enlistment of these Aborigines, in the first few months of the war, the Army had not finally decided on its enlistment policy; in particular, whether to admit Aborigines, Torres Strait Islanders and other non-Europeans. While the Army was still making up its mind, and country recruiting officers were confused about who to admit and who to exclude, some non-Europeans

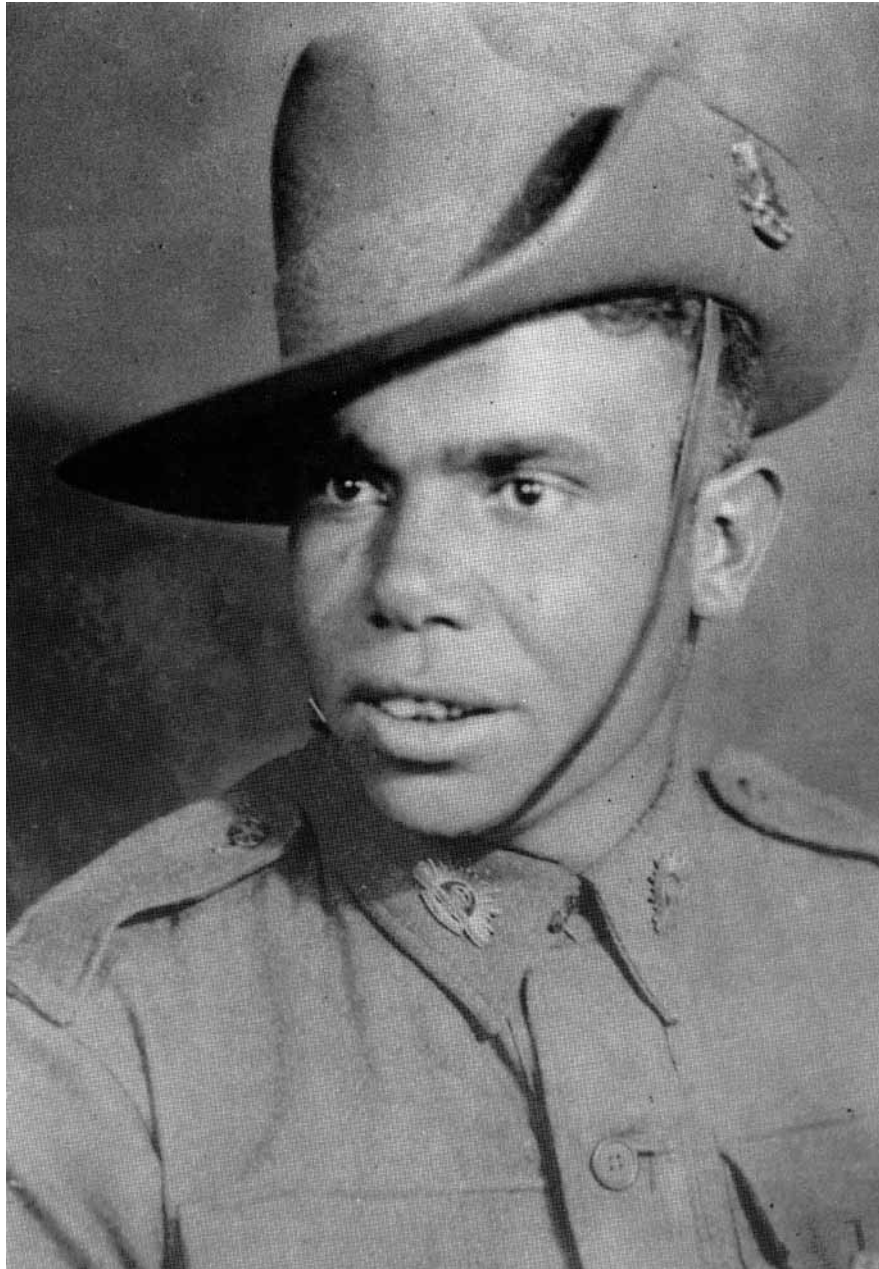
managed to enlist.¹⁸ Torres Strait Islanders Charles Mene, Ted Loban and Victor Blanco all joined the Militia on 4 September 1939, the day after Menzies' announcement, then transferred to the Second AIF on 15 December 1939.¹⁹ Timothy Hughes, an Aborigine from South Australia, enlisted on 4 December 1939 and was later to win the Military Medal in the tough fighting at Buna airstrip in Papua,²⁰ and Cecil Fitzgerald from Western Australia enlisted on 10 November 1939 probably becoming the first Aborigine from that State to do so.²¹ After training in Australia, these men soon joined their Second AIF units and were on their way to operational areas in north Africa and Britain.

Aborigines and Islanders saw the war as an opportunity to press for 'citizens' rights'. For them, the term 'citizens' rights' included much more than the granting of the vote. It meant equality — across the board — with white Australians. The strength of the Aboriginal argument for 'citizens' rights' depended for its moral leverage upon the enlistment of black Australians. Therefore, most Aboriginal political organisations supported Aboriginal enlistment.

Only the Australian Aborigines' League placed conditions on the service of Aborigines in the armed forces. In January 1939 William Cooper, the Honorary Secretary of the League, wrote to the Federal Minister for the Interior and author of the assimilation policy, John McEwen. Cooper's son had been killed fighting for Australia in the First World War. Cooper pointed out to McEwen that although Aborigines had enlisted in that war, and in some cases had made the supreme sacrifice, still they had not been granted the same status as white Australians on their return. He wondered whether Aborigines would volunteer to fight in the Second World War, arguing that:

... 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.²²

10 Fighters from the Fringe



Cooper urged that the enlistment of Aborigines should be preceded by the extension of 'citizens' rights'.

If Aborigines and Islanders were to use war service as a means of applying pressure for the extension of 'citizens' rights' then their first hurdle would be getting into the Army, Navy or Air Force. Despite the existence of the assimilation policy, early confusion at recruiting centres and the performance of black servicemen in the First World War, the armed forces remained opposed to the admission of black Australians. The Defence Act barred the call-up of persons who were 'not substantially of European origin or descent' but non-Europeans could enlist voluntarily. But the services moved quickly to close off voluntary enlistment as a means of entry for Aborigines and Islanders. The decision to exclude non-Europeans reflected the pervading racism of Australia in the 1930s and 1940s. The Acting Chief of the General Staff, discussing the question at a meeting of the Defence Committee said:

... the normal Australian would not serve satisfactorily with certain types of aliens, and ... on psychological grounds, the admission into the 2nd AIF of aliens or of persons of non-European descent would be inimical to the best interests of that force.²³

Despite the example of the few Aborigines and Islanders already serving and who were giving exemplary service, the Defence Committee decided that the enlistment of non-Europeans was

Left: Private Timothy Hughes MM enlisted in the Second AIF on 4 December, 1939, joining the 2/10th battalion, sometimes known as the 'Adelaide Rifles'. He served throughout the war with the battalion, participating in campaigns in Tobruk, Milne Bay, Buna, Sanananda, the Ramu Valley and at Balikpapan. During the heavy fighting for the Buna airstrip his sub-unit, 9 platoon, 'A' company of the 2/10th battalion, became pinned down by Japanese machine-gun fire. Hughes engaged the enemy machine gunners with grenades and sub-machine-gun fire, giving his platoon the chance to move to cover. He made three separate sorties with grenades and sub-machine-gun to silence the enemy positions. His coolness and remarkable bravery were recognised by the award of the Military Medal. A few weeks later he was wounded in action. Following the end of the war he took up a soldier settlement block in South Australia and became a leader of the local community; throughout his life he was a firm advocate of Aboriginal advancement. (*Photo courtesy of Paul Hughes*).

'undesirable in principle', but that a departure from this principle might be necessary to meet the special needs of each service during the war.²⁴ Unlike the Army and the Navy, the Air Force had a 'special need'. It had to find thousands of men suitable for training as air and ground crew for the Empire Air Training Scheme which trained Australian airmen for service in Britain. At the same time it had to find sufficient manpower for those RAAF units which would remain in Australia. To meet these demands the RAAF needed to draw its personnel from as large a pool as possible and therefore it decided not to exclude aliens and persons of non-European descent. Of the three services, the RAAF remained the most open to the enlistment of Aborigines and Torres Strait Islanders.

As a result of these decisions about whether persons of non-European descent would be admitted, each service published its own regulation stating those categories of persons who were eligible for voluntary enlistment. For the moment, the Army and Navy closed off any avenue of enlistment for Aborigines and Islanders.²⁵ Compared with the Defence Act, these service regulations carried little legal weight. Although the regulations were frequently challenged on moral grounds their authority was not legally challenged throughout the war. Officially, non-Europeans were to remain barred from military service although, as we will see, even the Army and Navy reconsidered and began to admit people of non-European descent later in the war.

The Military Board disseminated its decision throughout the Army on 6 May 1940 stating that the enlistment of persons of non-European descent was 'neither necessary nor desirable'.²⁶ This phrase was to become a major theme of the Army's official attitude to the enlistment of Aborigines and Islanders. No account was taken of the extent to which the volunteer had adapted to white Australian social values; 'colour' was everything. 'Part-Aborigines' who were 'half-caste' did not qualify as 'substantially European'. According to the policy, recruits had to be 'at least three-quartercaste' before they could be considered.²⁷

The promulgation of the policy triggered a wave of protest. Aboriginal political organisations and State governments

took up the cause of Aboriginal enlistment. Many pointed to those 'full-blood' Aborigines and Islanders who had enlisted in the First World War or in the Second AIF in 1939 or early 1940 before the ban had been enforced. The Queensland Department of Native Affairs pointed out to the Army the inconsistency of its policy. At Cherbourg, the Army had enlisted Frank Fisher, Charlie Gee Hoy, Leslie Purcell, Jim Edwards and Tom Bell, but Bernard Turner, Bob Landers, Tom Daniels, Albert Prince, Henry Willis and Joe Hegarty, although having identical racial characteristics, had been rejected.²⁸ Furthermore, argued the Department, the Army seemed to have forgotten the performance of over 150 Queensland Aborigines who served in the First World War. 'Judging by the number of those killed and wounded ... these coloured men proved themselves capable soldiers', the Department argued.²⁹

Under this attack the Military Board was forced to review its policy. Deciding to continue with its formal ban on the service of non-Europeans, in practice it adopted a more flexible approach to the admission of individual non-Europeans. Medical officers were given responsibility for deciding whether individuals were suitable for enlistment. Their decisions were to be guided by 'the general suitability of the applicant and by the laws and practices of the State or Territory in which the enlistment takes place'.³⁰ The general suitability of the applicant could depend as much upon the extent to which the applicant had adapted to the norms of the white community as upon the demand for manpower at the time. The reference to the laws and practices of the States and Territories addressed another stumbling block of the earlier policy — that Aborigines who held certificates of exemption from State Aboriginal Acts, derisively called 'dog licences' by many Aborigines, were legally entitled to the full rights of white Australians, including the right to enlist. This more flexible approach left the services better positioned to exploit Aboriginal, Islander and other non-European manpower as the strategic situation demanded.

Aboriginal political organisations also called for the formation of all-Aboriginal military units. As early as March

1938 the Australian Aborigines' League had called for the formation of an 'Aboriginal citizen corps', emphasising the link it saw between military service and citizenship.³¹ Despite the Army's rejection of Aboriginal service, suggestions along similar lines continued to be put forward by Aboriginal political organisations hoping to establish a claim for 'citizens' rights'. On 8 July 1940, the Aborigines' Progressive Association proposed the formation of an Aboriginal division manned entirely by persons of Aboriginal descent.³² Even the nurses were to be recruited from among Aboriginal women. Numbering over 16,000 men, the formation of a division was beyond the manpower resources of the Aboriginal and Islander populations. But the proposal made it clear that there was a considerable demand for an Aboriginal identity in the military forces. Nevertheless, the Army continued to oppose both the admission of individual Aborigines and Islanders and the formation of all-Aboriginal units.

Aborigines and Islanders at War

Some Aborigines and Islanders had joined the services early in the war before the barriers to the service of non-Europeans had been erected. Many others were to get their chance when, by mid-1941, Japan emerged as a major threat to Australia. From that point on, Aborigines and Islanders began to be admitted in relatively large numbers although the wording of the various regulations barring their service was never changed. Of 276 Aboriginal and Islander soldiers who served in integrated Army

Right: G. Leonard (left) and Harold West, prepare to embark from Sydney Harbour on 2 November 1941. The men were among a draft of reinforcements for the 2/1st Australian Infantry Battalion. Harold West, from Cunnamulla, Queensland, enlisted on 23 August 1941 and served in the Middle East and New Guinea where he died of disease on the Kokoda Track on 26 November 1942. He was buried at Bomana war cemetery near Port Moresby. Sapper Bert Beros, the author of the famous poem 'The Fuzzy Wuzzy Angels', wrote another poem called 'The Coloured Digger' about an Aboriginal soldier, which he dedicated to the memory of Harold West. (*Photo courtesy of the Australian War Memorial*).



16 **Fighters from the Fringe**

units and for whom the dates of enlistment are known, 135, or almost half, enlisted in the period from mid-1941 to mid-1942 when the Japanese threat was at its highest.³³ By the war's end, perhaps more than 3000 Aborigines and 'part-Aborigines' and a further 850 Torres Strait Islanders had served.

The chance to serve in the Army, Navy or Air Force presented Aborigines and Islanders with opportunities they had not had before the war. Many white Australians had joined up for the excitement and adventure the war offered, but more mundane considerations, such as a regular job with fair pay, had also been a significant factor for many. Aborigines and Islanders joined for the

Below: Victor Blanco gives a show of traditional Islander dancing to his mates while stationed in Britain with his unit in August 1940. Victor and Charles Mene (see chapter 3) were mates before the war and joined the Army, along with several other Islander mates, in the days immediately following Prime Minister Menzies' radio announcement that Australia was at war. (Photo courtesy of the Australian War Memorial).



same reasons; but in their case there was often an added dimension to the opportunities presented by the war. In the late 1930s and early 1940s, the range of employment offered to Aborigines and Islanders tended to be more limited than that available to white Australians. Most Aborigines were employed in one way or another in rural manual labour — stock work, shearing, ringbarking, road and railway construction, fruit and vegetable picking and a host of similar employments. Most Islanders were employed in

Below: Clive Upright, MM, seated, third from the left in the foreground. After coming out of operations against the Japanese in the Prince Alexander Ranges near Wewak, New Guinea, Trooper Clive Upright of 'C' Troop, 2/7th Commando Squadron relaxes with his mates and enjoys a beer while awaiting the arrival of trucks. Born on 11 May 1920, Clive Upright lived at Jerilderie, New South Wales. He enlisted in the CMF on 7 November 1941 but transferred to the Second AIF on 22 July 1942. He was awarded the Military Medal for bravery during operations near Sauri village on 11 May 1945, his 25th birthday, when he stood up in full view of the enemy to better direct machine-gun fire onto an enemy position. This photograph was taken a few weeks later, on 30 May 1945. (*Photo courtesy of the Australian War Memorial*).



18 Fighters from the Fringe

maritime work, especially the pearling, trochus and bêche-de-mer industries.³⁴ Military service not only offered the prospect of overseas travel — a prospect out of the reach of most Aborigines and Islanders at that time — but also a much wider range of employments. These might include a range of purely military skills, like those of infantrymen and artillerymen, but could also encompass skills which could lead to wider employment prospects in the post-war period; skills like vehicle and aircraft repair and maintenance, heavy vehicle operating, welding, cooking, electrical engineering, and so on. The war also presented Aborigines and Islanders with opportunities to work with white Australians and, in many cases, to exercise command as non-commissioned officers over them.

Those Aborigines and Islanders who managed to enlist often found that, in contrast to their pre-war lives, their service in the Army, Navy or Air Force was rich, rewarding and exciting. Probably the best known Aboriginal serviceman of the Second



Left: A group of Australian soldiers surveys the results of a minor skirmish in the battle for Gona in Papua. The heat and danger of battle forged such small groups into highly cohesive units where divisive issues like race were ignored. An unidentified Aboriginal soldier shares the hardships of battle with his white mates. (*Photo courtesy of the Australian War Memorial*).

Below: At Mossman, Queensland, the Second in Command of 'E' Company, 17th Battalion, Volunteer Defence Corps, inspects Torres Strait Islander members of the unit. The inspecting officer is Lieutenant A.J. Morgan and the soldiers are (from the left) Private David Pitt, Private P. Jose and Private W. Ah Wong. The Volunteer Defence Corps was a part-time Army intended to allow those with reserved occupations, like cane cutters, the opportunity to assist in the national defence on a part-time, voluntary, unpaid basis. Many Aborigines and Islanders in north Australia served in VDC units. David Pitt was born on Thursday Island, enlisted on 3 May 1942, and served in 17th Battalion, VDC, on part-time duty until his discharge on 21 October 1945. Two other members of the Pitt family may have served in the same unit: Arthur Pitt enlisted in the VDC on 10 December 1942 and was discharged on 21 October 1945; and Robert Richard Pitt enlisted on 16 April 1942 and was discharged on 21 October 1945. (*Photo courtesy of the Australian War Memorial*).



World War was Reg Saunders, who tells his story in the next chapter. Reg enlisted in 1940 and his service took him to the Middle East, Greece, Crete, New Guinea and Korea. He was the only Aborigine to be commissioned in the Australian Army during the war and he eventually rose to the rank of Major. Many others had less illustrious but no less exciting military careers. Charles Mene, who tells his story in chapter three, travelled the world as a result of his military service of over 20 years. Others, like Jim Brennan,³⁵ a Western Australian, and Len Waters,³⁶ a Queenslander, had unique experiences. Jim enlisted in the Second AIF in 1940 and was soon in operations in north Africa. During the battle of Al Elamein, he was captured and taken to a prisoner of war camp in northern Italy. He escaped from there and joined Italian partisans, helping them to fight the Germans for the remainder of the war. Jim returned to Australia after the war and was discharged from the Army in late 1945. Len Waters enlisted in the RAAF in August 1942. After initially training as a flight mechanic, he transferred to air crew training and was promoted to Sergeant on 1 July 1944 and to Flight Sergeant on 1 January 1945. Len was determined to fly and studied hard to pass his flight crew training course. His efforts were rewarded when he was selected as a fighter pilot, becoming the first Aborigine to do so. He saw action against the Japanese in Dutch New Guinea and in Borneo before the end of the war. Len tells his story in chapter six.

Some Aborigines and Islanders served with distinction, displaying outstanding bravery. Charles Mene³⁷ was to win the Military Medal for bravery in the Korean War. Tim Hughes,³⁸ a South Australian Aborigine, won the Military Medal during the bitter fighting at Buna airstrip in New Guinea. Clive Upright,³⁹ from Jerilderie, New South Wales, won the Military Medal during operations near Wewak on 11 May 1945.

Right: Alex Taylor enlisted at Adelaide on 13 July 1943, joining the RAAF. He served as a Flight Rigger and attended training courses at Shepparton, Geelong, Adelaide, Ascot Vale and Mount Gambier. He was posted to 7 Repair and Servicing Unit, RAAF, at Darwin on 20 December 1944 and joined 20 Squadron, also at Darwin, on 5 October 1945. He did not serve beyond Australia. (*Photo courtesy AIATSIS*).

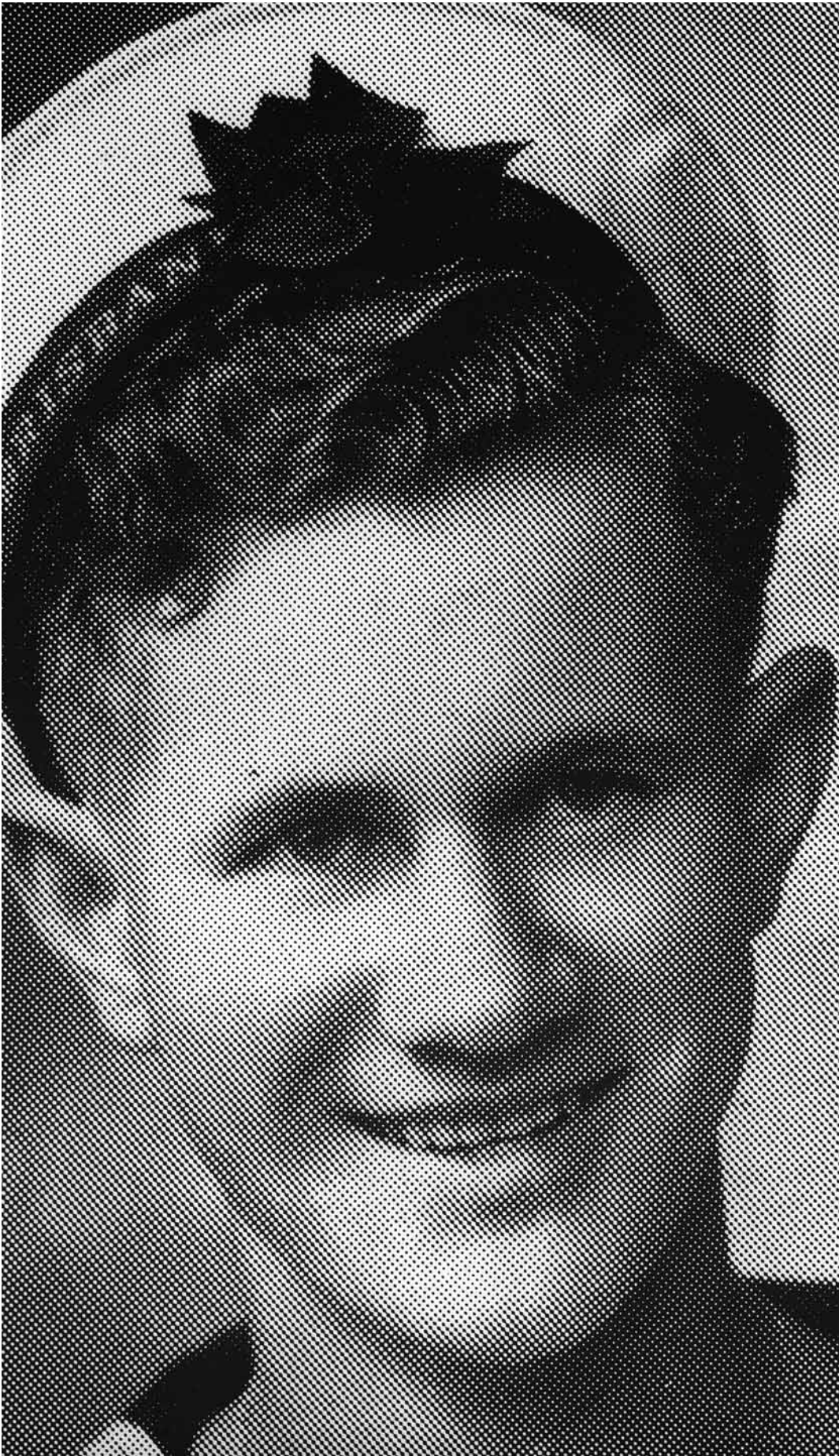




But if military service offered Aborigines and Islanders broader horizons and the opportunity to demonstrate their courage, it also confronted them with the ugly and brutal dimension of war. Like other Australian soldiers, sailors and airmen, Aborigines and Islanders bore their share of the burdens of battle. Harry Saunders, Reg Saunders' brother, was killed in action during the Buna campaign. Herbert Mallard,⁴⁰ a Western Australian, was killed in action within a few months of the end of the war. Edward Nannup,⁴¹ another Western Australian, was reported missing in action, presumed dead, in March 1942, and Thomas Gray,⁴² also from Western Australia, was killed in action within a year of having enlisted. Many others were also killed having taken up the responsibility of defending their country.

Others suffered perhaps even greater ordeals as they died in prisoner of war camps. Cyril Brockman,⁴³ a Western Australian, died of illness while a prisoner of war while George Edward Cubby,⁴⁴ a Queenslander, who became a prisoner during the ill-fated Malayan campaign, died in Changi POW camp along with John Knox⁴⁵ from Toomelah reserve in New South Wales. Perhaps the saddest case of all is that of Arnold Lockyer,⁴⁶ a Western Australian who served as a flight engineer and air gunner in the RAAF. His bomber was shot down during a raid on the Celebes in the Dutch East Indies on 17 July 1945 and he died while a prisoner of war six days after the war had ended.

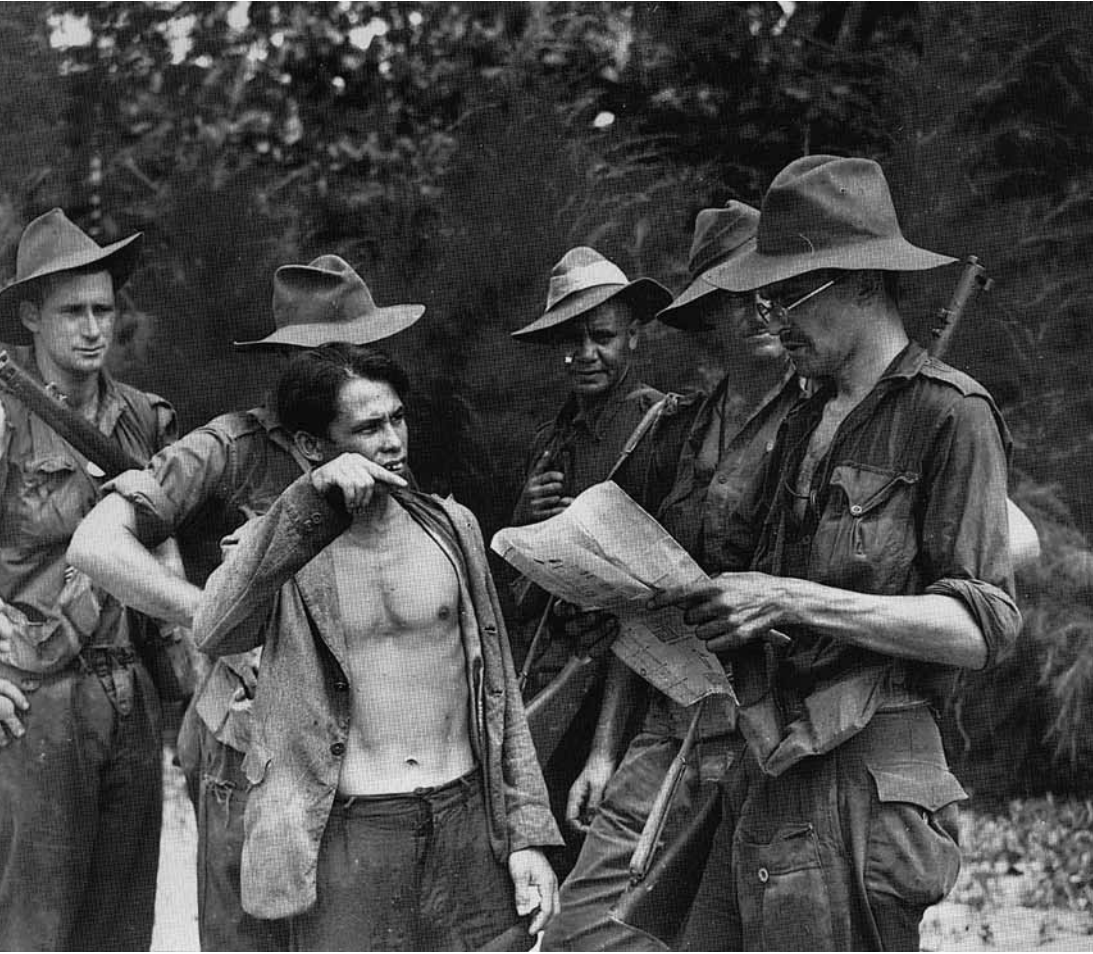
Left: Leslie Yuke at the wheel of a machine-gun carrier, a small, tracked armoured vehicle used widely by the Army in the Second World War. Before the war Leslie had been a bush worker, felling and milling timber and building fences. He joined the Army on 13 August 1941 at Brisbane, served in the 2/5 Australian Armoured Regiment, and was discharged on 12 December 1945. His brother, Stanley, served in the Army signals corps, saw overseas service in the Middle East, and was discharged in April 1944. To his regret Les saw no overseas service, as his regiment remained in Australia throughout the war. Nevertheless, like many other Aboriginal and Islander soldiers, his most significant memory of his war service was the firm friendships he enjoyed. (Photo courtesy of the Kombumerri Aboriginal Corporation for Culture and the Yuke family).



Left: Dick Ball was serving aboard the boomship *Karang* in Darwin Harbour during the Japanese air attack of 19 February 1942. The *Karang*, which normally controlled the anti-submarine nets across the mouth to Darwin Harbour, had been moored alongside a United States oil tanker at Darwin wharf, and pulled clear only minutes before Japanese bombs destroyed the wharf and the US ship. Later in the war, Dick served aboard another boomship controlling entry to the mouth of the Brisbane River. He also served in the RAN during the Korean War. His brother, Colin, died during the Second World War while a prisoner of the Japanese at Sandakan. (Photo courtesy of the Kombumerri Aboriginal Corporation for Culture and the Ball family).

Below: Brigadier H. Wrigley, Commander, 1 Base Sub Area, speaks with Private Augustin Mindemarra, a Western Australian serving with 1 Platoon, 14 Works Company, Royal Australian Engineers at Chermside, Queensland. Augustin Mindemarra enlisted in the Second AIF on 11 December 1940 at Claremont, Western Australia and was discharged on 25 January 1946. (Photo courtesy of the Australian War Memorial).





Left: George Mallard (third from right) about to go on a patrol on Labuan Island, Borneo, on 16 June 1945. The patrol is led by Lieutenant J.O.L. Sutherland (holding map), who is speaking to a Chinese guide and interpreter. George Mallard enlisted in the Second AIF on 11 November 1941 and served in 10 platoon, B company, 2/28 Australian Infantry Battalion. His brother, Herbert Mallard, had enlisted in the Second AIF in July 1941, but was killed in action approximately one month before this photograph was taken. (Photo courtesy of the Australian War Memorial).

Below left: Frank Forde, the Minister for the Army, chats with Corporal F. Latham of the 3rd Australian Advanced Reinforcement Depot during a tour of inspection to Western Australia. (Photo courtesy of the Australian War Memorial).

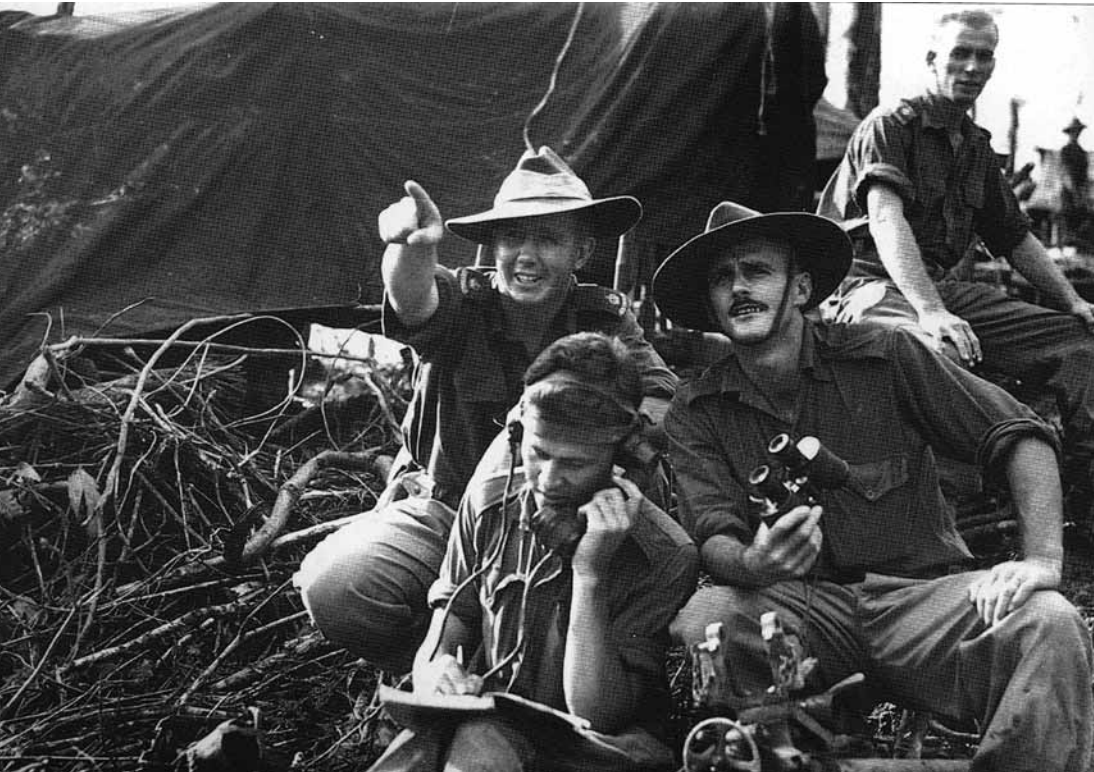
Below: Private Sidney Williams on a route march with fellow soldiers of the 8th Division, probably some time in 1940. (Photo courtesy of the Australian War Memorial).



Others, like Bill Carlyon,⁴⁷ Claude Livermore⁴⁸ and Claude McDermott⁴⁹ survived the ordeal of being prisoners of the Japanese. But such experiences could leave psychological scars which might take many years to erase. Still others, like Reg Saunders, Henry Mippy⁵⁰ and Ted Loban⁵¹ were wounded during their war service.

Though they bore the horrors of war in equal measure with their white comrades, yet the war did present some benefits to Aborigines and Islanders. Perhaps the most important was suspension of racism for the duration of the war. Men thrown together in small military units come to rely on one-another for support, particularly during the trauma of battle. Close bonds are formed

Below: This photograph is believed to show gunner Bob Bloomfield (seated, speaking into a telephone handset), an Aborigine from Hay, New South Wales. Born on 6 July 1918, he enlisted in the Second AIF on 22 January 1943 serving in a variety of artillery units. Here officers of the 2/1 Field Regiment are directing artillery fire onto a feature called 'the blot' in support of an infantry attack. The officers pass the fire control orders to Bloomfield who records them and relays the instruction to the gun position using the field telephone. (Photo courtesy of the Australian War Memorial).



and these preclude the divisive forces of racism. Both white and black servicemen frequently report that racism vanished during the war years. Both Reg Saunders and Oodgeroo Noonuccal, whose story appears in chapter four, remark on the absence of racism in the military during the war.

Torres Strait Islanders Defend the Strait

Under the threat of Japanese attack which had emerged by mid 1941, the Army not only began to enlist Aborigines in larger numbers but also abandoned its earlier refusal to form segregated units. By March 1941 War Cabinet had approved the formation of a unit of Torres Strait Islanders which was eventually to see the enlistment of over 800 men in a small number of segregated units.⁵²

Below: Private Steve Abala (centre), from the Northern Territory, enlisted in the CMF on 8 March 1942 and was transferred to the Second AIF on 8 June 1943. He is shown here at Morotai on 24 May 1945 where he was working on the staff of the Headquarters 1 Australian Corps Officers Mess. (Photo courtesy of the Australian War Memorial).



With the burgeoning threat of Japan, Darwin became a port of crucial defence significance. The maintenance of forces based at Darwin would rely largely on shipping moving through the bottleneck of the Torres Strait. To secure the bottleneck and protect shipping using it, an air base was located at Horn Island (later moved to Higgins Field on the mainland at Cape York). To secure the air base and to provide coast artillery to defend the Strait, a garrison, including Torres Strait Islander units, was raised. Although the Army continued with its official policy that the enlistment of non-Europeans was 'neither necessary nor desirable', it simultaneously raised the Islander force. Saulo Waia and Tom Lowah, whose stories appear in chapters five and seven, were enlisted into this force.

As Japanese forces moved south to occupy Timor in February 1942 and Lae by 8 March, the Islanders' contribution to the defence of the Strait was expanded. As if in response to the first Japanese air raid on Horn Island on 14 March 1942, enlistments of Islanders leapt from 115 to over 730 by the end of the year. By 1943, recruiting parties scouring the islands were unable to find additional recruits. Almost every able-bodied male Islander of military age had already been enlisted. Although the Islanders enlisted voluntarily, the pearling luggers, on which the Strait economy depended, had been impressed by the Army to prevent them falling into Japanese hands. Therefore, the Islanders had little alternative but to serve, since the luggers represented their only other means of livelihood.

Although the Army had planned to enlist over 1300 Islanders, this total was never achieved. Sufficient able-bodied Islanders of military age could not be found and, by the war's end, a total of about 770 Islanders had served in these units⁵³ along with a further 50 mainland Aborigines who had been recruited from north Queensland mission stations. The Aborigines served in a Water Transport Operating Company responsible for operating small ships in the coastal waters from north Queensland to the south coast of Papua. In this role their detailed knowledge of the coastal waters of the Cape was an invaluable aid to the operations of the unit. The

following table shows the strength of units manned by the Islanders:⁵⁴

UNIT	'Natives'	'Whites'
Torres Strait Light Infantry Battalion	440	48
Coast Artillery, Torres Strait	335	78
HQ Water Transport Group (Small Craft)	43	20
32 Australian Water Transport Maintenance Company	67	139
14 Australian Water Transport Operating Company	239	107
Torres Strait Pioneer Company	231	29
TOTAL	1355	421

Below: Islander soldiers were encouraged to supplement Army rations by catching fish. Eventually this process was formalised with the establishment of an Army Marine Food Supply Company which employed Islander soldiers to conduct fishing operations with the aim of reducing the logistic load resulting from the need to supply fresh food to the forces in the Torres Strait. The men are (left to right) Robson Aniba, Gaibere Ase, Bua Mene (Charles Mene's brother), Ngupai Luta, Sedo Gebade and, kneeling, Misman Lofman. (Photo courtesy of the Australian War Memorial).



The creation of these segregated Islander units may have been seen by the Army as a means of overcoming what it believed to be the problem of mixing white and black troops in barracks and permitting black NCOs to have authority over white soldiers. But segregation also had other impacts. The formation of the segregated units would have assisted the visibility of an Islander contribution to the war effort had the formation of these units ever been publicised, but the public, and more importantly, the Aboriginal political movement, were not to learn of their formation. Segregation also worked against the spirit of the assimilation policy because it suggested that the Islanders were not capable of being included within the framework of the white Australian military

Below: The war brought improved health care to some remote areas. At Thursday Island the 6th Australian Camp Hospital provided a women's ward for local women. Here Sister M. Netterfield chats with a Badu woman named Maria, and her baby Leila. Although the provision of health services improved on Thursday Island, for most of the war years health services declined for those living on the outer islands in the Torres Strait. (*Photo courtesy of the Australian War Memorial*).



structure. But segregation also made it administratively easy to discriminate against the black servicemen. Aborigines and Islanders serving in the units of the Torres Strait Force received about one third the pay of white Australian soldiers.⁵⁵ This discriminatory pay scale had no legal basis. Pay scales for the Army were set out in War Financial (Military Forces) Regulations and Military Financial Regulations, neither of which authorised special rates for Torres Strait Islanders or Aborigines. The aim of this underpayment was twofold: it was hoped to preserve the Islanders as a pool of cheap labour for the post-war pearling industry and it reduced the cost of garrisoning the Strait.⁵⁶

Below: Under the direction of Major Godtschalk, the Torres Strait Light Infantry Battalion formed a brass band. This photograph shows the newly formed band at practice under the command of Sergeant J. Grumley in October 1945. (Photo courtesy of the Australian War Memorial).



In addition to the discriminatory pay scales, Islander soldiers held other grievances against the Army: Islander NCOs had no authority over white private soldiers; Islander soldiers were not permitted to drink or gamble as white soldiers were; some soldiers had waited up to eighteen months for leave to their home islands and local island politics had been disrupted when island council elections had been postponed due to the war. While all of these issues were irritating, the main problem was the soldiers' low pay. The war had brought inflation to the islands and, with many of their menfolk serving in the Army at Thursday Island, the island communities were forced to rely on the soldiers' pay packets to purchase foodstuffs from the island stores. The inadequacy of the soldiers' pay was causing hardship and health problems amongst the soldiers' dependants.⁵⁷

These problems caused great dissatisfaction among the soldiers and on 30 and 31 December 1943 they mutinied, two companies of men refusing to go to their appointed duties. The soldiers resumed work on 1 January 1944, but the short-lived mutiny had stung the Army into reconsidering their pay. In February 1944 an inter-departmental conference met in Melbourne to examine the question. Representatives from a number of Federal government departments and from the Queensland government attended. The conference estimated that 'the amount of underpayment together with Repatriation liability was £30,000,000'.⁵⁸ Although it acknowledged that the Islander and Aboriginal soldiers were legally entitled to the full Australian Military Forces rates of pay, it decided that:

... such payment should not, in fact, be made. There were two reasons for this:

- (a) the sum involved; and
- (b) that if such natives were paid at such rates — far above the rates earned by them in civil life before the war — it would cause considerable trouble when they eventually left the army.⁵⁹

However, the conference did decide to increase the soldiers' pay to about two-thirds of that of a white soldier.⁶⁰ While the Japanese threat prompted the Army to form segregated Islander units contrary to its stated enlistment policy, the Army remained reluctant to grant the Islanders the full status of soldiers, preferring instead to regard them as a colonial force within Australia. It was because the Army had considered the Islander soldiers to be a colonial force that the Army had overlooked its legal obligation to give the Islanders the same rate of pay as other Australian soldiers. Instead, the Army had allowed classic colonial considerations, such as the post-war exploitation of Islander labour, to cloud its judgement in the matter. Furthermore, additional special conditions were imposed on the Islander units; they were to remain in the Torres Strait for the duration. This restriction on their deployment would limit their exposure to white Australian units and hidden away in this remote corner of Australia, their service would be largely overlooked by the news media and the Australian public.⁶¹

Aboriginal Guerilla Forces

Further afield, the Japanese threat was having similar effects. The sea approaches to Darwin were vital to the maintenance of the forces stationed there, and to defend them the Air Force arranged the construction of several airstrips on Darwin's flanks. These would extend air cover over the shipping lanes from the Torres Strait and along the Western Australian coast, as well as permit extended reconnaissance and surveillance over the northern approaches to Darwin. The shortage of white labour and the fact that these isolated airstrips could be constructed more cheaply using Aboriginal labour convinced the Air Force that the construction contracts should be let to outlying Aboriginal mission stations. Airstrips were constructed by mission Aborigines at Milingimbi Mission and Emerald River Mission extending air cover to the east of Darwin; at Port Keats and Drysdale River Missions extending air cover to the west; and at Bathurst Island Mission, extending air cover to the north and north-west.

Once constructed, the defence of these airstrips posed a problem. Basing detachments of Army personnel at each of these isolated outposts would have dissipated the Army's resources reducing its ability to defend Darwin itself. Until mid-1942 the Air Force could allocate only two or three men to each strip as 'aerodrome guards', while the Qantas Empire Airways flying boat base at Groote Eylandt was defended by a civilian rifle club formed from among the Qantas employees there.⁶² The airstrips were vulnerable and could be seized by the Japanese and used as bases from which to attack Allied shipping; the overland link between Darwin and the south-east, the Stuart Highway; and Darwin itself. East Arnhem Land was particularly vulnerable. The airstrips at Milingimbi and Emerald River Mission and the flying boat base on Groote Eylandt were all ideally located to

Below: In north Australia many Aborigines found that they could turn their skill at gathering bush tucker into an economic asset by trading with the thousands of soldiers, sailors and airmen who were moved to the north. These people, near Darwin, are selling freshly caught mud crabs to a soldier. (Photo courtesy of the Australian War Memorial).



support a Japanese thrust along the axis of the Roper River towards the Stuart Highway.

A further complication was that the East Arnhem Land area was known by few whites and there were no useful maps of the area. The local Aborigines had been largely responsible for this. They had been particularly aggressive and in the period 1932–33 had killed a number of intruders into the area. Their victims had included the crews of two Japanese trepang luggers, two white trepangers and Constable McColl, a member of a police patrol sent to apprehend the perpetrators of the earlier

Below: As well as those Aborigines who joined the Army, Navy or Air Force, there were thousands of others, particularly in north Australia, who worked for the services as civilian labourers. All three services needed large labour forces to keep the supplies flowing forward. With a few exceptions, these Aboriginal labourers were paid the standard rates according to the relevant State or Territory law. Often this was their first encounter with a cash wage. These Aboriginal labourers at Knuckey's Bend in the Northern Territory are spending their pay at the Army canteen operating from the back of an open truck. (*Photo courtesy of the Australian War Memorial*).



killings. Although each of these groups had been well armed and expecting trouble from the Aborigines, no Aborigines were killed or wounded in these skirmishes — a testimony to their military skills. To limit this violence, the Northern Territory Administration had imposed controls on the entry of white Australians into Arnhem Land. As a result, by 1942 few whites had the detailed personal knowledge of the area that the Army now needed.

By June 1941 the Army had found an answer to the problem of defending the East Arnhem Land airstrips. On 11 June 1941, the anthropologist Donald Thomson, then a Flight Lieutenant in the Air Force, gave a lecture to an Army audience on 'Arnhem Land and the Native Tribes who Inhabit that Area'. The lecture was based on his field research in the area before the war. In 1935, following the killing of Constable McColl, Thomson had volunteered to go to East Arnhem Land, make contact with the Aborigines there, study their culture and bring peace to the area. The Federal government accepted and Thomson lived with the Aborigines for two-and-a-half years, learning their language and establishing an intimate friendship with them.

In the audience at Thomson's lecture was Colonel W.J.R. Scott, the Director of Special Operations. He realised that the Aborigines of East Arnhem Land could be formed into a military unit under Thomson's command to provide early warning of Japanese intentions in the area and to help secure the airstrips.⁶³ Scott conceived a radical plan for the mobilisation of north Australia. Pastoral properties and local police stations were to form the basis of volunteer guerilla bands, while the Aborigines over the entire area were to be drafted into regional groups forming a network of coast-watching stations.⁶⁴ As part of the plan, Thomson was to be seconded to the Army to form an Aboriginal guerilla band for the defence of the East Arnhem Land airfields.

With the ketch *Aroetta*, six Solomon Islanders as crew, two white NCOs, a Torres Strait Islander, Gagai Kapiu, as bosun, and a formally enlisted Arnhem Land Aborigine, Raiwalla, Thomson set off to raise his guerilla force. His orders were:

1. To carry out a reconnaissance of the [Arnhem Land] area ...
2. To re-establish the friendly personal relations he had established with the Arnhem Land Aborigines during his field work in the period 1935–37 and to undermine any sympathy for the Japanese which the Aborigines may have harboured;
3. To provide flank protection for Darwin by organizing the Aborigines into a coast-watching force ...
4. To organize the Aborigines into a 'mobile force or patrol' so that they could be used as guerilla troops if the Japanese made a landing; and
5. To organize a small unit of Aborigines with particular skills in bushcraft, hunting, guerilla warfare and ambush to be used in the instruction of Independent Companies.⁶⁵

Thomson recruited 49 Aborigines for his force. Three had served gaol sentences for having killed Japanese lugger crewmen in 1932. Not surprisingly, Thomson faced the problem of convincing his Aboriginal soldiers that the government now wanted them to kill any Japanese they found.

The Aborigines' traditional mode of inter-tribal warfare honed their military skills to perfection over many generations. Thomson found that with only slight modification he could train his force to use these traditional skills against the Japanese. Scott had made a wise choice in selecting Thomson to command the unit. As an anthropologist, Thomson was aware of the cultural sensitivities of his soldiers and could ensure cohesion within his command even though it comprised several tribal groups normally hostile to each other. A commander without Thomson's awareness could not have achieved the cooperation of the Aborigines, possibly confirming to those who were sceptical of the usefulness of tribal Aborigines that they could not be effective soldiers.

On the northern and western flanks of Darwin, other groups of Aborigines were providing similar service, forming what

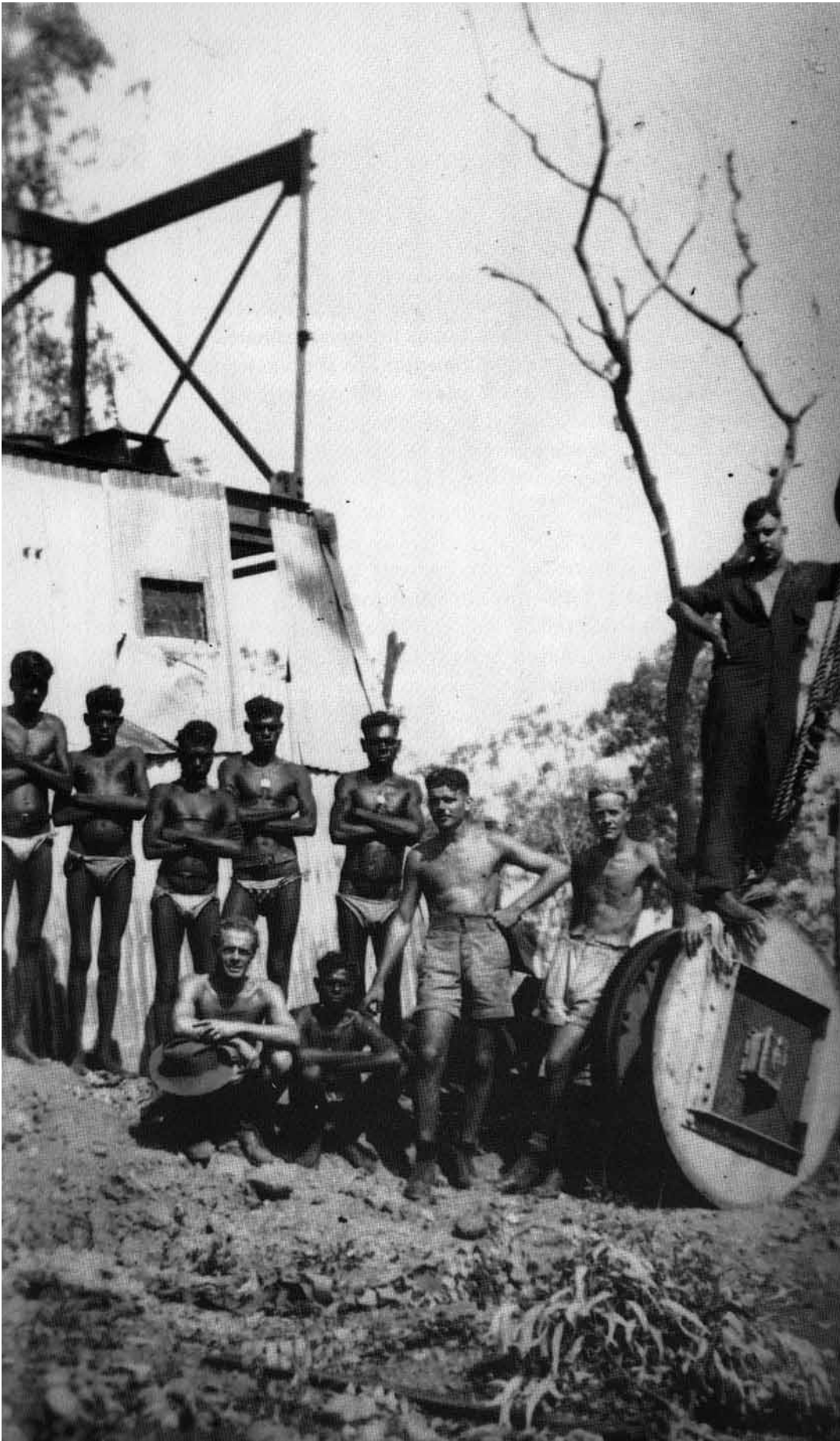


amounted to a loose surveillance screen around Darwin. This screen came into existence not through a coordinated approach to the military employment of Aborigines, but as the uncoordinated result of similar pressures on local commanders. In the vast space of northern Australia, local commanders with responsibility for surveillance over areas they lacked the resources to cover, turned to the local Aborigines. It was for this reason that small forces of Aboriginal *de facto* servicemen⁶⁶ were organised at Melville Island north-west of Darwin, at Delissaville to the south-west and at Groote Eylandt to the east.⁶⁷

Still attempting to resolve its dilemma over the enlistment of detribalised Aborigines into conventional Army units, the Army's higher command could not tolerate the formal enlistment of tribal 'full-bloods'. Nevertheless, in its *de facto* military forces in the Northern Territory, the Army wished to draw on the valuable skills these tribal 'full-bloods' possessed; skills like a detailed knowledge of the topography of their tribal areas; the location of water; the going, particularly in the wet season; food resources; coastal waters and the ability to communicate with local Aborigines who could have valuable information to report. Such information could be vital in the unmapped north. Its possession could add significantly to the mobility of forces operating in the area. But of similar importance was the Aborigines' bushcraft and survival skills and, in the case of Thomson's unit, their traditional tactical skills.

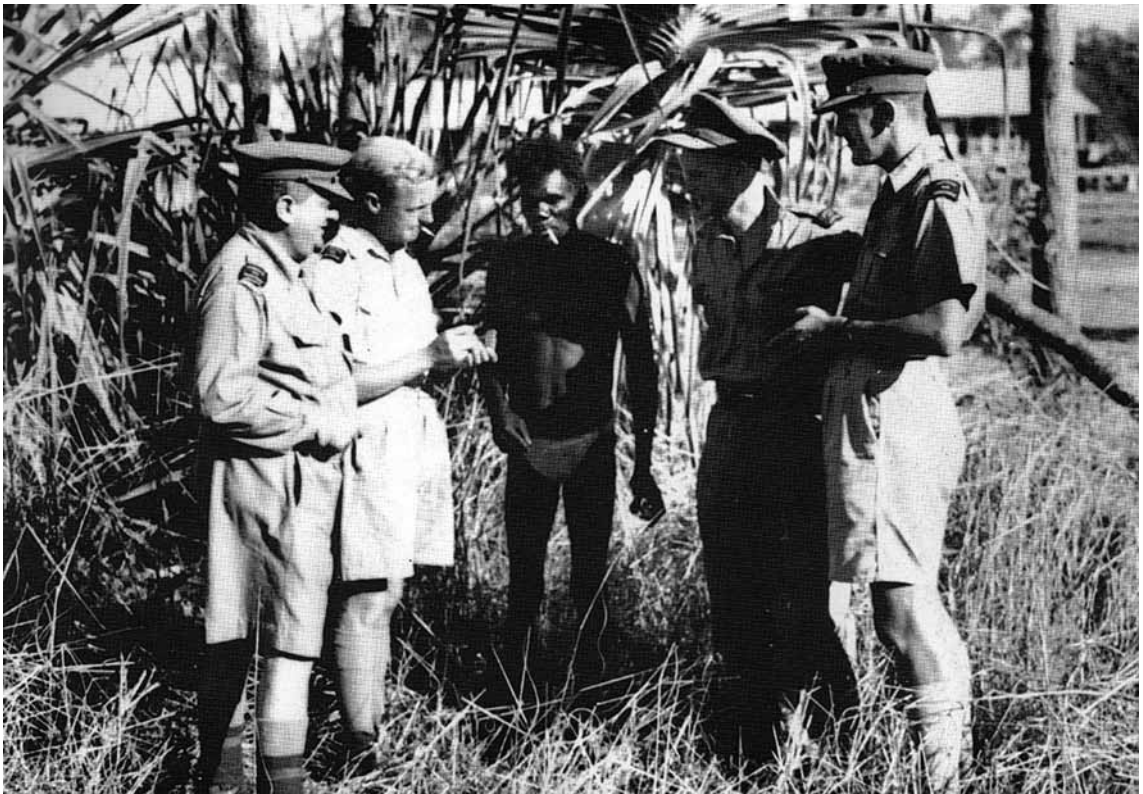
As the air war intensified across north Australia, the Air Force became particularly concerned to exploit the Aborigines' skills. Aircrew brought down in remote parts of northern Australia through enemy action or mechanical mishap faced probable

Left: The RAAF established many small bases along the north Australian coast. These were often the sites of small airfields or radar stations which provided security and early detection of Japanese air raids. Most of these bases were located near centres of the Aboriginal population such as Mission stations so that the Aborigines could provide their labour to support the bases. Here stores are unloaded at a small RAAF base in north Australia, and the local Aborigines have been pressed into service to lend a hand. (*Photo courtesy of the Australian War Memorial*).



Left: Aborigines assisting RAAF personnel to dismantle a radar station at the end of the war. At these isolated radar stations, the RAAF personnel and the local Aborigines often worked closely together and established good relationships. The Aborigines were usually 'paid' with rations or tobacco for their work but in some of the larger bases, like Emerald River Mission on Groote Eylandt, more formal systems of pay were established. This radar station was at Cape Don in the Northern Territory. (*Photo courtesy of the Australian War Memorial*).

Below: During one of the many air raids over Darwin, an American pilot named Van Auken was shot down over Melville Island. He was rescued by two Aborigines who put him in their dugout canoe and paddled him across the Clarence Strait to Darwin, delivering him to his Squadron Headquarters. Here, one of the Aborigines, named Johnny, explains the details of the rescue to war correspondents and RAAF intelligence officers. (*Photo courtesy of the Australian War Memorial*).



44 Fighters from the Fringe

death unless they could be quickly rescued. Aborigines with their superb survival skills performed an important service in ensuring that downed airmen were quickly rescued and returned to the battle.⁶⁸

Wishing to exploit the Aborigines' local knowledge and skills without formally enlisting them, the Army, Navy and Air Force simply ignored the niceties of formal enlistment. The resolution of the services' dilemma in this way left the Aborigines in an uncertain situation. Would the Japanese regard them as civilians or soldiers?

Below: RAAF personnel and an unidentified Aborigine examine a bomber shot down during a night raid on Darwin. Nine Japanese bodies were found near this wreck, four or five more than the usual complement for this type of bomber. RAAF intelligence was vitally interested in examining any Japanese aircraft brought down, and found Aborigines very useful for this aspect of their work. Their bush skills and keen powers of observation enabled them to locate crash sites more quickly than white Australians and to find small but important pieces of the aircraft which might be spread over a large area. They were also able to track any survivors who may have wandered away from the crash site. (Photo courtesy of the Australian War Memorial).



What was their entitlement to the normal repatriation benefits of soldiers? On what scale would they be paid? These issues were left unresolved.

Whites Accuse Aborigines of Disloyalty

Like the Australian defence force facing the dilemma of whether to open enlistment to non-Europeans, black Australians also faced a dilemma as a result of the war. Bearing in mind their marginal status within the Australian community, should they support or

Below: The Army created and administered settlements for its Aboriginal workers and their families in the Northern Territory. Once established, these provided opportunities for the Army to deliver a range of services including health care, organised sport, entertainment such as film nights, access to Army canteens and modest education for children. These services were virtually unknown by Aboriginal workers in the pre-war Northern Territory. This outdoor class for the children at the Adelaide River Aboriginal settlement is being taught by Fred Nadpur, a Larrakeyah. Looking on is Mrs Lucy Shepherd, the children's matron. (*Photo courtesy of the Australian War Memorial*).



oppose the national war effort? White Australians implicitly acknowledged the existence of this dilemma when they began to suspect Aborigines of disloyalty. Oodgeroo Noonuccal (Kath Walker) touches on this question of the loyalty of Aborigines in her story in chapter four.

The Aborigines' loyalty was not generally questioned before early 1942, which suggests that the phenomenon was related to the perceived threat of invasion.⁶⁹ But following the entry of Japan into the war and the bombing of Darwin on 19 February 1942 which many Australians took to be a preparation for an invasion, Aborigines came to be regarded by some as sympathetic to the Japanese. One example of the more hysterical of these accusations was that of 'Safety First', whose letter to the editor of

Below: Throughout northern Australia, Aborigines provided their labour to support the war effort in a huge variety of ways. Here Maudie (left) and Maggie are being supervised by an officer of the 69th Australian Women's Army Service Barracks. Over 700 Aboriginal labourers were used by the Army in the Northern Territory alone, freeing servicemen and women to do other work. (Photo courtesy of the Australian War Memorial).



the *Sydney Morning Herald* was published on 11 March 1942. 'Safety First' wrote of Japanese 'garnishing their faces with burnt cork', and asked, 'How many of my fellow Australians could tell them from an abo [sic]'.⁷⁰ He said that Aborigines were 'the most dangerous race in the north today ... [and were able to give] good information to a Jap reconnaissance plane 60 to 100 miles off the coast of Broome, Wyndham or Darwin'. The Aborigines' greatest friend, he said, was the 'pearling lugger Jap'.

Like all good propaganda, the claims of 'Safety First' contained a slim element of truth. The pre-war pearling industry had involved extensive contact between Japanese pearlmen and Aborigines. Though some of these contacts were marked by a degree of brutality and exploitation unlikely to produce sympathy for the Japanese cause, in other cases the Japanese appear to have taken great pains to foster good relations with Aborigines. In addition, it was believed that Japanese naval officers working as pearling lugger crewmen, had sometimes visited the north Australian coast to gather information.⁷¹ But accusations like those of 'Safety First' also tapped a deep vein of racism which ran through the Australian psyche. Many white Australians regarded the relationship between black and white as one of unremitting hostility. They tended to assume that Aborigines would seize the opportunity offered by the Japanese threat to 'punish' whites for the racist excesses of the past like the 1928 Coniston massacre and the alienation of Aboriginal land.

Ironically, the belief that northern Aborigines might be disloyal burst upon the armed forces at precisely the moment they were beginning to admit Aborigines to military service, both formal and *de facto*, in relatively large numbers. This only served to intensify the dilemma the armed forces believed themselves to be facing.

To the accusations of civilians like 'Safety First' were added the claims of Army units stationed in north Australia. In May 1942 the 2/4th Independent Company operating in the Northern Territory reported that:

... several natives on questioning favour the JAPANESE for the gifts of opium, tobacco, calico etc. they have given them in the past. They further state that the white men have not given them anything and on a number of occasions have molested them and their lubras.⁷²

The failure of white Australians to recognise some of the foundations of Aboriginal culture such as the observance of obligations to reciprocate, and their failure to acknowledge white exploitation of Aboriginal women, were major factors contributing to Aboriginal discontent. In expressing their discontent, Aborigines unwittingly confirmed the suspicions many white Australians felt — that they resented white Australians and would assist the Japanese in the event of an invasion. Indeed, some intelligence reports merely asserted that Aborigines ‘were a big potential menace’ and would assist the Japanese without providing any supporting evidence for this view.⁷³ In Western Australia the Army went even further saying they believed Aborigines to be ‘possible potential enemies’⁷⁴ although over 400 Aborigines from that State were to give formally enlisted service before the war’s end.

Authoritative sources like the anthropologists A.P. Elkin and Donald Thomson also warned the Army that Aborigines might be disloyal.⁷⁵ But unlike others, both suggested that the Aborigines’ local knowledge and bushcraft skills, often seen as of military value to the Japanese in the event of an invasion, could be won over to the Allies if sensible precautions were taken. It was partly for this reason that Thomson had been seconded to the Army to raise a unit of tribal Aborigines in Arnhem Land (described above).

Faced with a number of claims suggesting Aboriginal disloyalty in the Cape York area, the Army decided to investigate the issue. The investigation was conducted by an officer who had a low regard for Aborigines, and predictably, it found that ‘the opinion of the [mission] superintendents who collectively control over 1000 natives [was] that not one per cent could be relied upon to

be loyal'.⁷⁶ This conclusion proved to be a gross overestimate. The churches responsible for the mission stations later explained that their Aboriginal flock had had very little contact with the Japanese and were staunchly loyal to their missionaries, if not to the nation.⁷⁷ Being tribal Aborigines, many had only the vaguest idea of an Australian nation beyond the borders of their traditional lands. It was churlish to accuse such people of 'disloyalty' to a political entity they were largely unaware of. The investigation and its findings indicate how a failure to look beyond a white perspective had led to a false conclusion. No attempt had been made to consider the question of a Japanese invasion from the Aborigines' point of view. Following the white invasion of their territory, Aborigines in central and north Australia had become adept at sensing the attitude of particular whites towards Aborigines. This ability enabled these dependant people to gauge how far they could pursue their traditional culture before the limits of white tolerance were reached. The Aborigines would react to a Japanese invasion in the same way they had reacted to the white invasion of their territory. Tied to their traditional lands, they would not withdraw before the invader, but would attempt to maintain as much as they could of their traditional culture, cooperating only as much as was required to preserve it. This strategy, as it applied to the Aboriginal relationship with whites, was later to be described by the anthropologist A.P. Elkin as 'intelligent parasitism' — the ability to make the best of an unfavourable situation.⁷⁸ Contrary to the Army's findings, the Aborigines were not disloyal but neutral.

De-tribalised Aborigines also fell under suspicion when some Aborigines began to utter pro-Japanese statements. In the first year of the war there had been a burgeoning of interest and sympathy towards Aborigines as a result of wartime propaganda against the Nazi concept of a master race and the newfound sense of national unity which gripped the country. Some Aborigines became frustrated when this trend did not continue, and expressed their dissatisfaction in statements which seemed pro-Japanese.

In Queensland, it was reported that Aborigines 'openly stated that the Japs told them that the country belonged to the blacks, had been stolen from them by the whites and that "bye and bye" they (the Japs) would give it back to them (the blacks). So!'⁷⁹ Similar reports came from Western Australia⁸⁰ and from Victoria.⁸¹ But these reflected less an Aboriginal support for the war aims of Japan than a dissatisfaction with the status of Aborigines within Australia.

Nevertheless, while Aborigines fell under suspicion throughout Australia, those in Western Australia became the subject of draconian security controls. A proclamation under National Security Regulations required all employed Aborigines there over the age of 14 to be issued with a 'Military Permit'. These permits established rigid military control over the movements of Aborigines and gave great powers to their white civilian employers. Unemployed Aborigines were removed to institutions where they were subjected to 'discipline' designed to fit them for employment. The 'discipline' was also intended to discourage them from becoming unemployed and from slacking in their work.⁸²

Despite the belief that Aborigines were disloyal, no evidence could be found of any Aborigine taking steps to thwart the national defence effort. They did not lack opportunities. Across north Australia Aborigines were involved in the rescues of downed Allied airmen, the construction of airfields, the movement of military stores, coast-watching, the operation of small ships, the guiding of patrols, work in war industries and other activities. These presented many opportunities for sabotage, the gathering of intelligence and the spreading of disinformation. There is no evidence that Aborigines ever attempted to seize these opportunities. On the contrary, although the war presented a dilemma as much for Aborigines as for the armed forces, Aborigines overwhelmingly chose to give their support to the national defence effort.

Unlike Aborigines, Torres Strait Islanders were rarely accused of disloyalty. By the scale of their contribution to the war effort through service in the segregated units of the Torres Strait, Islanders

had demonstrated their loyalty. But other factors were also relevant. Islanders lacked the bushcraft skills of mainland Aborigines and there was little possibility of them assisting the Japanese in an overland drive against Australian forces. But Torres Strait Islanders also possessed a culture which was similar in many ways to European culture: they lived in permanent villages; accumulated personal wealth and power; their communities had an established social hierarchy. In short, while Islanders possessed cultural traits which were recognisable to white Australians, Aborigines seemed alien. They were outsiders, strangers, on whom it was easier to lavish suspicion.

Below: In some ways the war drew Australians together, and those far behind the front line could lend their support to the war effort in a thousand small ways. Here the women of Cumerungunga, NSW, knit woollens for the troops (*Photo courtesy AIATSIS*).



The Arrival of Black Americans

Although Aboriginal and Islander military service and the suspicions that were sometimes levelled against the Aboriginal community were important factors affecting black–white relations during the Second World War, another important factor was the arrival in Australia of black Americans. Following the Japanese attacks on Pearl Harbor, the Philippines and Malaya, the United States saw Australia as a convenient base from which to mount a counter-offensive. But the Australian government was resistant to the idea that black Americans should be included among the US troops sent to the Australian base. Such an idea was contrary to the White Australia Policy, the legislative instrument the government hoped would preserve Australia as a bastion of the white race in Asia. Nevertheless, with a major portion of its defence forces already tied up in the defence of British interests in Europe and north Africa, and with the Japanese pressing in Malaya, Australia had little option but to fall in behind American wishes and allow the entry of black troops.⁸³

The influx of US troops to Australia was very rapid. Over 90,000 US troops had arrived by August 1942 and of those over 7000 were black.⁸⁴ By September 1943 the number of US troops in Australia peaked at over 119,000.⁸⁵ To placate the Australian government, which was still smarting over the abrogation of the White Australia Policy, the US forces initially endeavoured to confine most of their black troops in remote country areas away from the centres of white Australian population. Black troops were deployed to centres in Queensland like Rockhampton, Cloncurry and Mt Isa, and to Birdum in the Northern Territory. This, and the fact that most black US troops served in Queensland, tended to bring the black troops into areas of relatively high Aboriginal population.

In these country districts black Americans were often drawn into the company of the local Aborigines through their mutual experience of racism and their rejection by the local whites. Some black Americans complained that they were rarely invited into the

company of whites,⁸⁶ though many also claimed that their treatment in Australia was better than they had experienced at home, though few would have gone so far as to say that no racism existed in Australia.⁸⁷ Conversely they were welcomed into the Aboriginal community. Len Watson, who lived in Rockhampton during the war, recalled that:

In Rockhampton most of the Aborigines lived on what they called the north side, so a lot of black Americans used to go there as well.

One thing that made a big impact on us was the amount of money they had. The other thing was the way they told us how they were treated by whites. I heard my dad and others talking about how they saw black Americans being belted by white American soldiers. Until we saw it happen to other black people from other countries we thought we were the only ones who were recipients of this kind of treatment.⁸⁸

Conversations about racism and reactions to it may have nurtured support for and given direction to the growing Aboriginal political movement in Australia which was to come fully into flower in the 1960s and 1970s. But black Americans also presented a more immediate model to Aborigines. They showed that blacks could be well-educated, skilled and competent; in fact, well able to perform the jobs previously reserved for whites in Australian society.

Later in the war large numbers of black Americans served in camps near larger population centres like Sydney and Brisbane. The Second World War had been a broadening experience for many Australians. Large numbers of soldiers had journeyed the world and had worked among the peoples of many different lands. Even within Australia, thousands of servicemen and women had worked side by side with Aborigines or Torres Strait Islanders in northern Australia. Others might have met some of the Chinese or perhaps Dutch East Indies refugees or servicemen the war had brought to Australia. Few could have failed to be conscious of the black Americans. These men presented a new model of the black man to white Australians. By and large, black Americans

were well-trained, skilled workers capable of commanding high pay. They were well-dressed; polite; novel. They were fighting and dying alongside white Australians. Together with the generally broadening experience of the Second World War, the presence of the black Americans reminded white Australians of what Aborigines could be.

After the War

Some Aborigines and Islanders, like Charles Mene and Reg Saunders continued to serve their country after the Second World War. Charles Mene remained in the Army and joined the British Commonwealth Occupation Force in Japan and later served in the Korean War and the Malayan Emergency. Reg Saunders left the Army briefly after the Second World War but rejoined to serve in the Korean War. Yet despite the extent of their service there has been no record of the Aboriginal and Islander view of these experiences. In the remaining chapters in this book, Aborigines and Islanders who served Australia in war tell their own stories in their own words. Though too few, these are at least some of the Aboriginal and Islander memories of the war.

NOTES

1 A full account of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander contribution to the Second World War, including the basis upon which this estimate is made, can be found in Robert A. Hall, *The Black Diggers: Aborigines and Torres Strait Islanders in the Second World War*. Sydney: Allen and Unwin, 1989.

2 I have used the terms 'Aborigine' and 'Torres Strait Islander' to refer to those specific groups. Occasionally, the term 'Islander' has been used in the interests of brevity. Since government policies in the 1930s and '40s placed great store in defining Aborigines by their parentage, or 'caste', the use of terms to denote the extent of individual's Aboriginality has been unavoidable. In these cases I have used the terms 'full-blood' and 'part-Aborigine'. The term 'full-blood' was in common use during the Second World War but I have used 'part-Aborigine' in

preference to the even more offensive but commonly used terms 'half-caste', 'quarter-caste' and so on.

3 *Official Yearbook of The Commonwealth of Australia*, no. 35, 1942–43, 315. Aboriginal census of 30 June 1941. Although the official estimates of the Aboriginal population in the *Commonwealth Yearbook* were not accurate before the late 1930s, estimates were reasonably accurate throughout the 1940s. A full discussion of the accuracy of Aboriginal population statistics is available in L.R. Smith, *The Aboriginal Population in Australia*. Canberra: Australian National University Press, 1980.

4 For example, the Native Administration Act, 1905–1936 (Western Australia) and the Northern Territory Aboriginals Ordinance, 1918.

5 C.D. Rowley, *The Destruction of Aboriginal Society*. Ringwood: Penguin, 1972, 288.

6 See, for example, Australian Archives (hereinafter AA), A659, 41/1/101: Death of Native Lallilicki at Mount Cavanagh Station; and A431, 46/450: Ill-treatment of Aborigines.

7 Western Australian State Archives, 993, 1266/43: Native Matters — Forrest River Mission. Letter, Commissioner of Native Affairs to Superintendent Forrest River Mission, 5 May 1943.

8 Lieutenant C.D. Clark, 'Aborigines in the First AIF', *Army Journal* 286 (March 1973), and Chris Coulthard-Clark, 'Aborigine Medal-Winners of the First AIF', unpublished manuscript.

9 Chris Coulthard-Clark, 'Aborigine Medal-Winners of the First AIF'.

10 AWM 28: Recommendations file for honours and awards.

11 Coulthard-Clark, *ibid.*

12 From the time of its formation after the First World War until the end of the Second World War, the RSL remained supportive of Aboriginal and Islander servicemen.

13 See, for example, AA, MP508, 82/712/670: Letter from Mr Ferguson Aborigines' Progressive Association. Letter, Ferguson to the Prime Minister, 8 July 1940.

14 The Australian Aborigines' League and the Aborigines' Amelioration Society began in 1932 while the Aborigines' Uplift Society and the Aborigines' Progressive Association began in 1937. See A.P. Elkin, *Citizenship for the Aborigines: A National Aboriginal Policy*. Sydney: Australian Publishing, 1944, 19–21.

15 Aboriginal political activity at this time remained within the conventional bounds of British parliamentary practice and, since most Aborigines did not have the vote and most whites were unconcerned with their plight, was easily controlled. For example, in 1937 the Australian Aborigines' League submitted to the Federal government a petition to the King seeking Aboriginal representation in parliament. However, the government simply refused to forward the petition. See Andrew Markus, *Blood from a Stone*:

William Cooper and the Australian Aborigines League. Melbourne: Monash Publications, 1986.

16 However, the Communist Party of Australia, by no means a major party, had the most progressive Aboriginal policies, seeking to fulfill Aborigines' demands for 'citizens' rights'.

17 Samuel Fejo was eventually discharged from the Army on 6 December 1945, Jimma Fejo was discharged on 16 May 1947 and William Muir was discharged on 10 October 1945. Information on these soldiers and others was supplied by the Army's Soldier Career Management Agency (hereinafter SCMA).

18 Australian War Memorial (hereinafter AWM) 60, 87/1/1035: Enlistment of Half-castes. Letter, Area Brigade Major, 11 Brigade Area, to HQ Northern Command, Brisbane, 23 February 1942.

19 Charles Mene describes his lengthy war service in chapter 2. This information was provided by SCMA and Mrs Ada Williams.

20 Dudley McCarthy, *South West Pacific Area: First Year — Kokoda to Wau: Official History of Australia in the War of 1939–45*. Canberra: Griffin Press, 1959, 471.

21 WA State Archives, 993, 529/40.

22 AA, A659, 40/1/858: Australian Aborigines' League. Letter, Cooper to McEwen, 3 January 1939.

23 AA, A2671, 45/1940: Enlistment in Defence Forces of Aliens and of Persons of Non-European Descent. Defence Committee meeting minute, 15 February 1940.

24 Ibid.

25 AA, A816, 72/301/23: Requirement to be of Substantially European Origin. Appendix A to Report by the Principal Administrative Officers' Committee (Personnel) at Meetings held on 7 and 28 August 1950.

26 AA, MP508, 275/750/1310: Aborigines — Enlistment in AIF. Military Board memo, 6 May 1940.

27 AA, MP508, 275/750/1310: Letter, GOC Western Command to the Secretary, Military Board, 7 May 1940.

28 Ibid. Letter, Queensland Department of Native Affairs to 7th Brigade, Victoria Barracks, Brisbane, 30 May 1940.

29 Ibid. Letter, Queensland Director of Native Affairs to the Colonel-in-Charge, Administration, Northern Command, 27 June 1940.

30 Ibid. Military Board Minute, 13 August 1940.

31 AA, MP431/1, 929/19/912: Australian Aborigines' League — Proposals for Training of Aboriginal Men and Boys. Letter, J. McEwen to President, Australian Aborigines' League, 17 March 1938.

32 AA, MP508, 82/712/670: Letter from Mr Ferguson Aborigines' Progressive Association. Letter, W. Ferguson to the Prime Minister, 8 July 1940.

33 Generally, the Army did not record the race of its recruits. Therefore, it is now difficult to identify Aboriginal or Islanders soldiers who served in integrated

units. A list of 276 Aboriginal and Islander servicemen was compiled from names mentioned in official records, correspondence with Aboriginal ex-servicemen and other sources. Dates of enlistment and discharge were provided by SCMA.

34 The *bêche-de-mer* industry harvested sea slugs for sale as a delicacy in Asia. Trochus is a shell used in the manufacture of buttons and other similar items.

35 WX7218 Private James Brennan enlisted at Claremont, Western Australia on 1 August 1940 and was discharged on 28 November 1945.

36 78144 Leonard Victor Waters enlisted in the RAAF on 24 August 1942 and was discharged with the rank of Warrant Officer on 18 January 1946.

37 QX6555 Private Charles Mene enlisted on 15 December 1939 and was discharged from the army with the rank of Corporal in April 1961.

38 SX1570 Private Timothy Hughes enlisted in the Second AIF on 4 December 1939. His date of discharge is unknown.

39 VX89336 Private Clive Upright enlisted on 7 November 1941. His date of discharge is unknown.

40 WX15372 Private Herbert Mallard enlisted at Claremont on 23 July 1941 and was killed in action on 13 May 1945.

41 WX14716 Private Edward Nannup enlisted at Claremont on 2 July 1941.

42 WX7802 Private Thomas Gray enlisted at Claremont on 10 August 1940 and was killed in action in June 1941.

43 WX10712 Private Cyril Brockman enlisted at Claremont on 15 January 1941 and died of illness while a prisoner of war on 13 August 1943.

44 QX11113 Private George Edward Cubby enlisted on 17 July 1940 and died while a prisoner of war on 17 December 1943.

45 QX11089 Private John Knox enlisted on 11 July 1940 and died while a prisoner of war on 31 August 1942.

46 80471 Airman Arnold Alexander Lockyer enlisted in the RAAF on 5 May 1942 and died while a prisoner of war on 21 August 1945.

47 WX15785 Private William Carlyon enlisted on 13 August 1941 and was discharged on 7 February 1946.

48 No further information is available.

49 No further information is available.

50 WX16855 Private Henry Terry Mippy enlisted on 6 October 1941, was wounded in action by gunshot on 10 September 1943 and was discharged from the Army on 28 March 1946.

51 QX6557 Private Ted Geoffrey Loban enlisted in the Second AIF on 15 December 1939. He was wounded during the Greek campaign, losing a hand, and was discharged from the Army on 16 November 1942.

52 AA, A2676, 52/301/46: War Cabinet Minute 901(b)(i): Native Forces for Defence of Commonwealth Territories.

- 53 AWM 54, 506/5/10: Native Labour: Torres Strait Malayans serving with the AMF — Conditions of Service 1944. Report, recruiting party, 23 July 1943 and letter, Commander, First Australian Army to Land Headquarters, 15 September 1943.
- 54 AWM 54, 628/1/1: Torres Strait Islanders — Enlistment, pay etc. War Establishments for various units.
- 55 AA, MP742/1, 85/1/445: Torres Strait Islanders — Discipline. Report, Commander First Australian Army, 18 February 1944.
- 56 AA, MP508, 247/704/56: Employment of Torres Strait Islanders on Military Duty at Thursday Island. Letter, Director of Military Operations and Intelligence to the Deputy Chief of the General Staff, 4 April 1941.
- 57 AWM 54, 628/1/1: Letter, Acting District Finance Officer, to Deputy Director of Native Affairs, Queensland, undated.
- 58 Ibid. Minutes, Inter-departmental Meeting to Discuss Employment of Natives in the Army, 1 February 1944. Of the various archival records of this meeting, this Army file is the only one which states this figure.
- 59 Ibid.
- 60 In October 1983 the Minister for Aboriginal Affairs, Clyde Holding, acknowledged the wartime underpayment of the Islander soldiers and commenced action to rectify it. He authorised the payment of \$7 million over three years to the Islander and Aboriginal ex-servicemen or their dependants.
- 61 Press reporting of Aboriginal affairs declined during the war. For example, the *Sydney Morning Herald* published 457 articles relating to Aborigines between 1935 and 1938, but only 37 between 1942 and 1945. Between January 1940 and December 1945 only eight articles dealing specifically with Aboriginal war service appeared and only one of these referred to the service of formally enlisted Aborigines. The remainder discussed the war work of civilian Aborigines. The service of Torres Strait Islanders was not mentioned.
- 62 AA, A816, 14/301/252: Defence of Karumba and Groote Eylandt Flying Boat Bases. Letter, Minister for Civil Aviation to the Minister for Defence, 27 July 1939.
- 63 AWM 54, 741/5/9: Report: The Organisation of the Northern Territory Coastal Patrol and the Special Reconnaissance Unit 1941–1943, Squadron Leader D.F. Thomson. See also AA, MP729/6, 38/401/138: *Aroetta* — Movements. Most Secret Minute, Lieutenant Colonel Scott to Director Military Operations and Intelligence, 30 June 1941.
- 64 Ibid. Appreciation, Lieutenant Colonel Scott, 18 August 1941.
- 65 AA, MP729/6, 38/401/138: Letter, Lieutenant Colonel Scott to HQ Northern Command, 13 September 1941.
- 66 By *de facto* servicemen I mean those individuals who were expected to perform military service against the Japanese but who were not formally enlisted.
- 67 See AA, NTAC 1980/111: Miscellaneous records maintained by E.J. Murray,

Superintendent of Delissaville Settlement. Documents on this file describe the formation of an Aboriginal unit at Melville Island and a second unit, under Murray's command, at Delissaville. See also Northern Territory Archives Service, interview transcript TS64: Reverend Len Harris, wartime missionary at Groote Eylandt.

68 For examples of Aboriginal service see AA, MP151, 533/201/368: Mines Washed Ashore — Melville Island. See also RAAF Historical Section, North-west Area Interview File, 105 Fighter Control Unit File Searches. Instructions were issued to airmen to help them in their relations with Aboriginal rescuers. See AWM 54, 85/10/5: Instructions to Airmen who Force-land on the North West Coastal Area of Australia, written by an AIF Guerilla Group Major, undated.

69 In 1940, the Lutheran missions at Beagle Bay in Western Australia, Hermannsburg in the Northern Territory and Hope Vale in Queensland attracted the interest of Army security services. The missionaries of German descent at Beagle Bay and Hope Vale were interned but the Aborigines themselves were not regarded as a security threat. However, at Hermannsburg, the Aborigines themselves fell under suspicion. Army security personnel reported that some Aborigines had painted swastikas on the walls of buildings. See AA, MP742/1, 175/1/189; Hermannsburg [sic] Mission — Use of W/T Equipment. Report on Hermannsburg Mission by GSO 7th Military District, 11 July 1940, and AA, A431, 46/450; Ill-treatment of Aborigines.

70 *Sydney Morning Herald*, 11 March 1942.

71 C.T.G. Haultain, *Watch Off Arnhem Land*. Canberra: Roebuck Society, 1971, 200.

72 AWM, 52, 25/3/4; 2/4 Independent Company. Weekly Report, undated but about May 1942.

73 AWM, 54, 831/3/4: Report on Gulf Reconnaissance — May–July 1942 by Captain A.J. Marshall.

74 AA, MP729/6, 29/401/626: Letter, Prime Minister to the Minister for the Army, 24 July 1942.

75 AA, A659, 4V1/3043: Co-operation — Aborigines/Whites after Invasion. Letter, A.P. Elkin to the Prime Minister, 2 April 1942. See also AWM 54, 741/5/9: The Place of the Natives of Arnhem Land in the Defence of the Coast of Northern Australia with a Proposal for the Organisation of a Force for Scouting and Reconnaissance, by Flight Lieutenant Donald F. Thomson, June 1941.

76 AA, A373, 3950: Transfer of Natives Cape York. Extract from Queensland Lines of Communications File Number F55/l6 MRO No. 6, Mission and Native Affairs Department. Also see AA, MP729/6, 29/401/626: Japanese Activities amongst Aborigines. Report: Native Missions Thursday Island and Peninsula, by H.B. Beaman, undated.

77 *Ibid.* Letter, Moderator of the Presbyterian Church of Queensland to the 'Minister for National Security', 20 January 1943.

78 Tigger Wise, *The Self-Made Anthropologist*. Sydney: Allen and Unwin, 1985, 214.

- 79 AA, MP729/6, 29/401/626: Letter, Director-General of Security to the Director of Military Intelligence, Allied Land Force Headquarters, Melbourne, 24 July 1942.
- 80 Ibid. Letter, Prime Minister to the Minister for the Army, 24 July 1942.
- 81 AA, B356, 54: Lake Tyers Managers' Reports 1930–1944. Managers' report for the period ended 31 August 1942.
- 82 AWM, 54, 39/1/2: Proclamation, Commonwealth of Australia, Protected and Controlled Area (Native and Coastal). See also AA, MP508, 4/702/1116: Protected and Controlled Areas Native and Coastal.
- 83 Kay Saunders, *War on the Homefront: State Intervention in Queensland 1938–1948*. St Lucia: University of Queensland Press, 1993, 61. Australia initially asked for a total exclusion of black troops but gradually modified its attitude, eventually agreeing to the permanent basing of black Americans in Australia.
- 84 Ibid. 66.
- 85 E. Daniel Potts and Annette Potts, *Yanks Down Under: 1941–45: The American Impact on Australia*. Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 1985, 30.
- 86 Kay Saunders, *War on the Homefront*, 70.
- 87 Daniel Potts and Annette Potts, *Yanks Down Under 1941–45*, 188–89.
- 88 L. Watson, '1945: Enter the Black Radical', *National Times Magazine* 1 April 1974, 5.