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Contents

| | |
|---|----|
| Introduction | 4 |
| Timeline | 6 |
| Proud Members of the British Empire | 8 |
| Gallipoli | 12 |
| The Western Front | 16 |
| Australians at Home | 18 |
| Women in World War I | 22 |
| Victory at Last | 26 |
| Commemoration | 28 |
| Glossary | 30 |
| Index | 32 |
| Find Out More | 32 |

Words that are printed in bold are explained in the Glossary on pages 30 and 31.

Introduction

This series looks at Australian history from just before the time Australia became a nation in 1901 to the present day. Each book examines a different period of Australian history over the 20th century and into the 21st century. This 111-year period has been a time of great change in Australian history.

When World War I broke out in August 1914, Australia had only been an independent and **federated** nation for 14 years. Australians saw their country as part of the larger British Empire. The war was the first time that many Australians were able to see their country as independent and able to play a part in world affairs as a nation. So, when the men started to go off to war, while they saw themselves as doing their bit to defend the British Empire, they also saw the war as an opportunity to show the world what they as Australians could do. The Anzacs who landed at Gallipoli in April 1915 were very aware that this was a 'baptism of blood' for the new nation. By 1918, we had proved ourselves, but at what cost?



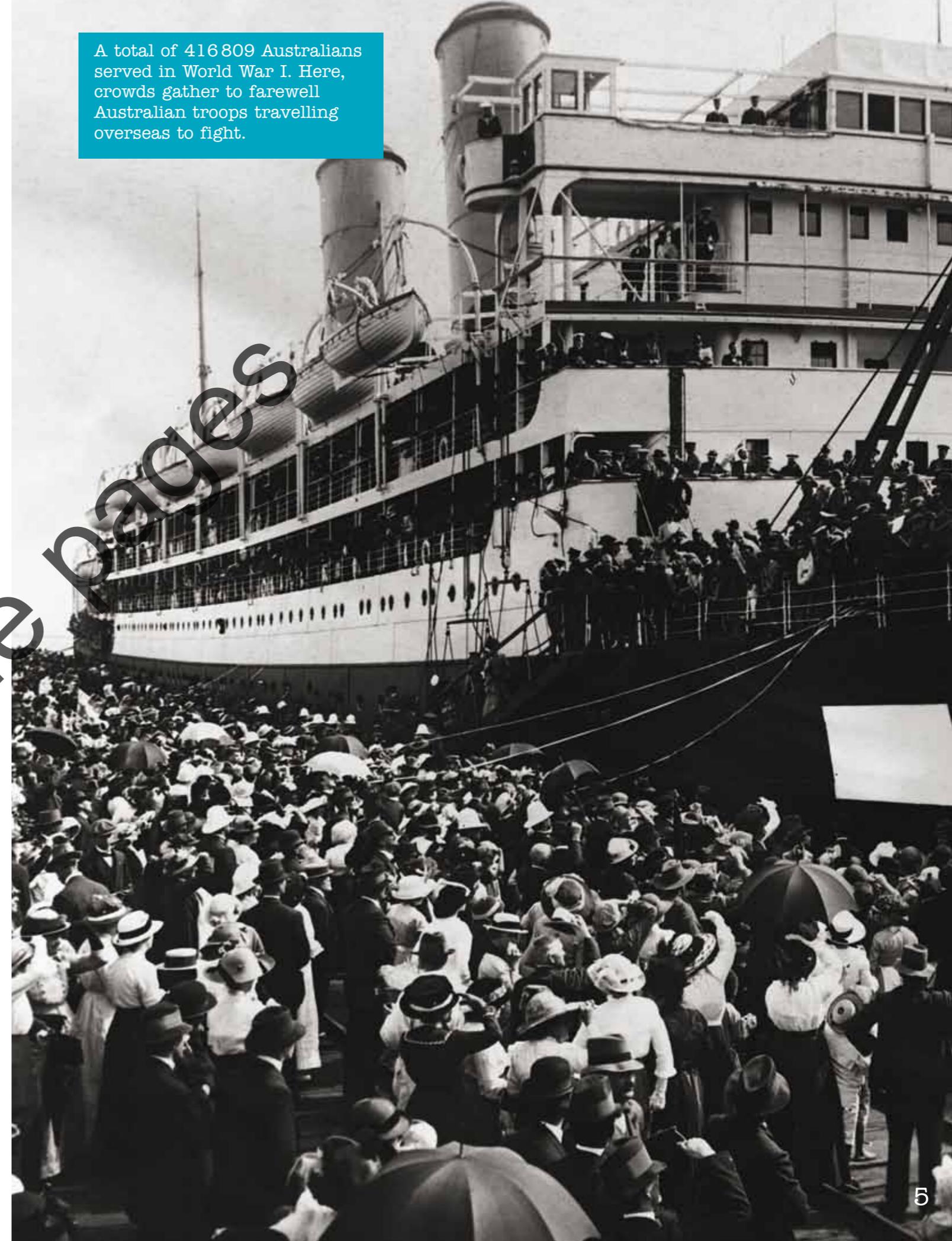
About This Book

This book covers the period from the beginning of World War I in 1914 to its conclusion in 1918. You can read about:

- Australia's role as a member of the British Empire and as part of the Asia-Pacific region
- Australia's involvement in World War I
- the Gallipoli **campaign**
- the creation of the Anzac legend
- the **conscription** issue in World War I
- the experiences of women in World War I
- Australia's **commemoration** of World War I.

Before being sent to Turkey in April 1915, the 20 000 men in the Australian Imperial Force were sent to train for the war in Egypt.

A total of 416 809 Australians served in World War I. Here, crowds gather to farewell Australian troops travelling overseas to fight.



Timeline

| | | |
|---|--|---|
| <p>1914</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ 4 August 1914 Britain and Germany declare war on each other. ■ 11 August 1914 Australia begins to recruit an army to send to Europe. ■ 1 November 1914 First Australian troops leave Australia for Egypt. | <p>1917</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ 31 October 1917 The Australian Light Horse wins the Battle of Beersheba in Palestine. ■ 20 December 1917 The second conscription referendum is lost. | <p>1918</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ 25 April 1918 The Battle of Villers Bretonneux, France, takes place. ■ 4 July 1918 The Battle of Hamel, France, occurs. ■ 31 August–2 September 1918 The Battle of Mont St Quentin, France, takes place. ■ 29 September 1918 Australians storm the Hindenburg Line, France. ■ 1 October 1918 The Australian Light Horse takes Damascus in Syria. ■ 11 November 1918 The war ends with the armistice. |
| <p>1915</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ 25 April 1915 Australians go into action at Gallipoli. ■ 6–9 August 1915 The Battle of Lone Pine, Gallipoli, takes place. ■ 7 August 1915 The Charge of the Light Horse at the Nek, Gallipoli, occurs. ■ 19 December 1915 The last Australians are evacuated from Gallipoli. | | |
| <p>1916</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ 5 May 1916 Australians go into action on the Western Front, France. ■ 1 July 1916 The Battle of the Somme begins. ■ 23 July–3 September 1916 The Battles of Pozières and Mouquet Farm, France, take place. ■ 28 October 1916 The first conscription referendum is lost. | | |
| <p>1917</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ 11 April 1917 The First Battle of Bullecourt, France, occurs. ■ 3 May 1917 The Second Battle of Bullecourt, France, occurs. ■ 7 June 1917 The Battle of Messines Ridge, Ypres, Belgium, takes place. ■ 1 August–14 November 1917 The Third Battle of Ypres, Belgium, takes place. | | |

Australian soldiers landed at Gallipoli in April 1915.

Sample pages



Proud Members of the British Empire

In August 1914, with these words, ‘... Australians will stand beside our own to help and defend her to our last man and our last **shilling**’, Andrew Fisher, the leader of the Australian Labor Party and soon to be prime minister, **pledged** Australia’s support for Britain at the outbreak of World War I.

Fisher added that Australia would stand for the ‘honour’ of the ‘**mother country**’ as well as Australia’s own honour. Today, Australians might wonder why an Australian prime minister would be so worried about the honour of a country 20 000 kilometres away from us and a war that could not really touch our shores. In 1914, Australia was only a newly formed **federation** of six separate British colonies. Each colony had been tied closely to Britain, and while they might now be **independent**, cultural and trade ties were still strong.

Why Was There a War?

In August 1914, the great powers of Europe declared war on each other. On one side were Germany, Austria–Hungary and Turkey, while on the other side were Britain, France, Russia and, later, Italy and the USA. The war had been building for a long time for many reasons, including:

- a longstanding hatred between France and Germany over land that Germany took from France in 1870 in a war between the two countries
- a wave of **nationalism** that swept the world, especially Europe, at this time. People like the Serbs in the old Austro-Hungarian Empire were becoming keen to throw off the rule of their Austrian emperor and become independent nations

- **rivalry** between Britain, France and Germany over their **empires** and the sizes of their armies and navies
- an aggressive stance by the government and military of Germany that made many people in Europe, especially the French, nervous.

Australians and the Empire

Australians were proud of being part of the British Empire. It was perhaps the biggest empire the world had ever seen. To be part of a big empire like this made Australia, then a new and small country, proud and gave Australians security. Security was important to Australians at this time because the population was small and they were a relatively small number of Europeans in a vast Asian region.

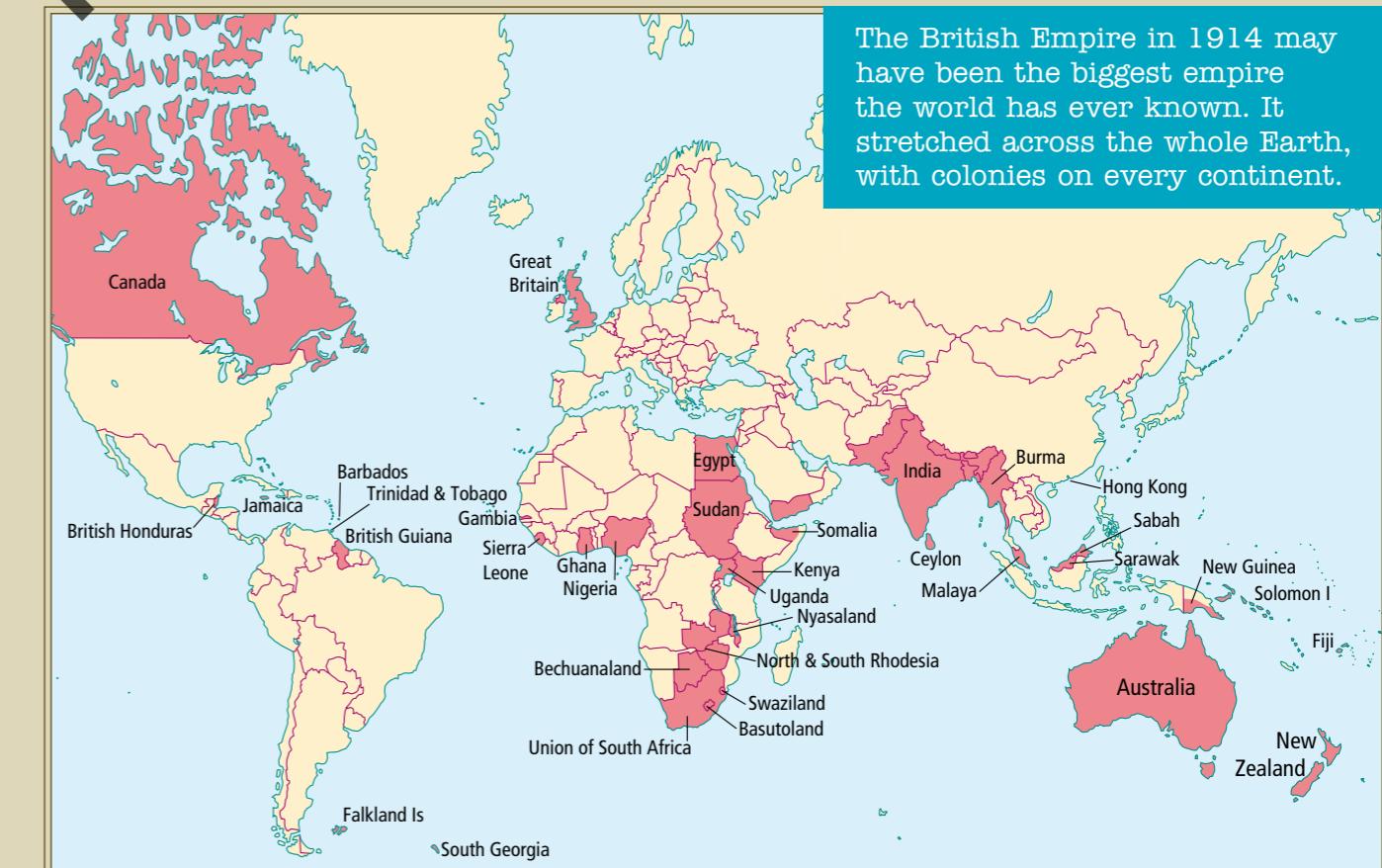
Duty to the Empire

Australians felt a duty to defend the Empire and had shown this by volunteering to fight in the Sudan in North Africa in 1885, the Boer War in South Africa from 1899 to 1902 and the Boxer Rebellion in China in 1900. So, in 1914, when Germany threatened Britain’s interests, Australians volunteered once more to fight to defend Britain.

Manning Clark, an Australian historian, wrote of the mood in Australia when war was declared:

But when Great Britain declared war on Germany at midnight on 4th August, crowds sang the national anthem in the streets, bands played *Rule Britannia* in the cafes, and crowds cheered and sang in the theatres. A mob got out of hand in Melbourne and raided the Chinese quarter of Little Bourke Street, while at the University of Melbourne on the following day the students sang *God Save the King* at the end of lectures.

Manning Clark, *A Short History of Australia*, p. 190



Australians Volunteer

The war didn't affect Australians directly, but many Australians were keen to use the opportunity to show that we were a nation alongside the other great nations of the world. There were also many personal reasons why Australian men were keen to volunteer for this war, and their women were mostly keen to support them. These reasons included:

- boredom and a chance to get some adventure
- the shame of being seen to be a coward and 'not doing your bit'
- unemployment
- being sick of the wife and kids
- desire to 'help their mates'
- **patriotism.**

The Australian Government Steps In

When the Australian **Constitution** was written in the late 1800s, the states kept much of their power over areas like health, transport and education. To the new Australian Government went control of 'external affairs' and control of **imports** and **exports** (goods coming into and leaving the country), usually by imposing import duties (taxes) on goods coming into Australia. In fact, early in the new nation, this was the main source of income for the Australian Government. Until World War I, income taxes were raised solely by the state governments. The new government quickly set about building new armed forces, with special emphasis on the navy, because Britain was withdrawing most of her ships from Australia. The government wanted to be sure that when the war started there was some organisation already in place.

How Things Changed

The war changed the **division of power** between the states and the Australian Government in a way that nobody in 1900 could have foreseen. By the passing of a *War Precautions Act*, the government took powers over many aspects of life and government in the name of the war effort. Some of these powers, taken from the states, never went back to them. Here are some of the ways in which the Australian Government extended its powers:

- the introduction of an income tax on all earners. Over the years, this was to lead to the Australian Government being the only government that **levied** income tax, with the states dropping out altogether
- encouraging the development of new industries such as the BHP steelworks in Newcastle
- the control of the sales of all wool and wheat products for the war years, by selling the whole of the crops to Britain
- the establishment of a government-owned shipping company to ensure Australia's ability to deliver these goods
- the introduction of **price-fixing** of day-to-day goods, such as the price of bread, to help control supply of these goods and to control **inflation**
- the raising of War Loans to help **finance** the war
- Commonwealth Government initiatives to help start new industries, such as beginning the creation of what was later to be called the **CSIRO**.

Posters such as these encouraged men to volunteer to fight in the war.

