

THE FURPHY

ARMADALE SUB-BRANCH OFFICIAL NEWSLETTER

January 2026 Edition



**1 Commerce Ave, Armadale, WA 6112
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General Meetings:

Second Sunday of the month at 1100hrs

Annual General Meeting:

Second Sunday of September

Committee Positions

Armada Sub-Branch Committee	
President	Mr Mike Fairweather
Vice President	Mr Bob Giles
Secretary	Ms Carol King
Treasurer	Mrs Cheryl Cowie
Warden	Mr Graeme Cowie
Warden	Mr Keith Northcott
Membership Officer	Secretary
Committee	Mr Geoff Scott
Committee	Ms Fiona Boyle
Advocate / Welfare Officer	Mr Brent Errington
Bar Manager	Mr Mike Fairweather

ADVOCATE / WELFARE

Brent Errington “Erro” is available as follows:

At the Armadale RSL Sub-Branch:

Monday: by appointment only

Thursday: between 0900 - 1400hrs

Weekday Contact Details:

Mobile: 0407 449 150

e-mail: welfare2@armadalersl.com.au

Diary Dates for January

<i>Day</i>	<i>Date</i>	<i>Event</i>	<i>Time</i>
Sunday	4 th	Social Committee Meeting	1100
Tuesday	6 th	Management Committee Meeting	1100
No General Meeting in January			

***The Armadale RSL Sub-Branch
Executive and Committee wish all our
Members a very Happy and
prosperous New Year***



Secretary's Notes

Hi Everyone,

I was hoping that we would be winding down in the lead up to the end of 2025 however that's not actually proven to be the case.

We've finally received quotes and now submitted an application for a potential grant under the Veterans Facilities Fund totalling around \$172,000. This covers some quite major maintenance/upgrades that are required. The President will detail some of the major items in his report. We'll keep you informed of the progress of this.

The kitchen will open on the 2nd Sunday of each month commencing in 2 weeks time. The cost is \$20 and no bookings will be taken, so it will be pay on the day. Please support this initiative.

There is also another Grant available for Veterans welfare but we have until early February to have a crack at this one. I'm trying to get a bit of time away from the Sub-Branch to recharge my own emotional batteries just at the moment!

When cooking Kale. Try adding some coconut oil. It makes it a lot easier to scrape into the bin.

As always, I must extend my sincere appreciation to Lois, Irene, Cheryl and Lisa for their great work in keeping the Social Committee alive and well. You do a fabulous job and the whole membership can't thank you enough for the efforts you put in. Thank you all.

Thanks to everyone who patronised, assisted and managed the Sub-Branch over the past year.

I wish you and your families all the very best for the New Year.

Best regards as always,

Carol King

Sub-Branch Secretary

e-mail: secretary@armadalersl.com.au

PRESIDENT'S REPORT

Hi Members,

Thanks to those few who helped out in obtaining quotes for the upcoming grant which had to be in before 20th December.

Some of the **major** items we've applied for included:

- | | |
|---|----------|
| • Solar System including batteries | \$46,000 |
| • Electrical – New Switchboards, lighting and rewiring etc. | \$39,200 |
| • Carpet replacement (Wilson Room and Offices) | \$10,200 |
| • Kitchen upgrade, 2 new ovens, fridge etc. | \$16,000 |
| • Painting (internal and external) | \$27,000 |
| • Compressor / Condenser and Glycol upgrades for cool room | \$5,000 |
| • Upgrade to Ablution areas | \$15,000 |

Should we receive the approval for this expenditure, there may be a need to close certain areas of the building while work is being carried out but, that can't be helped with the number of activities involved. I'll try to make sure that as much as possible will be done outside the Friday and Sunday opening days though.

I'd like to thank everyone who took the time to patronise our facilities during the year and wish you all a happy and prosperous New Year.

That's all from me for now,

Mike Fairweather

President

Returned Services League Armadale Sub-Branch

Ph: (08) 9497 1972. M: 0403 980 290

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We have been contacted by Greg O'Reilly who has been writing for a few years now for several journals in the UK, specifically about machine gun tactics and their contribution to the success of WW1 in 1918.

Most recently, Greg has had an article published about his grandfather's unusual service and PTSD in the "Stand To" Journal of the Western Front Association. It is an extremely interesting article about his Grandfather who lived about 200 yards from our Armadale RSL, next to the railway line and was a long time member.

We have requested Greg's permission to publish this article in a future edition of the Furphy. Once that approval is received, I'm sure you will all enjoy the story about not only the "Cost of War", but the role of machine guns during the Great War.



*24. August 1944: German soldiers surrender to Leclerc's troops - hours before the liberation of Paris reaches the 2. French Tank Division at the Town Hall
What seemed like a local fight at that moment truly marked the beginning of the end of the German occupation in Paris*

ROAST LUNCH

2nd Sunday of each month

Commencing Sunday 11th January 2026

(1230 hours)



***Roast Beef
and Yorkshire Pudding***

Only \$20

Pay on the day – No Bookings

**A mummy coated in
chocolate and nuts
has been uncovered
in Egypt.**

**Archaeologists
believe it may be
Pharaoh Rocher.**

**Found these on a bench in the park...
Not sure what kind of sicko leaves
their underpants by a kids play area,
but they smell clean.**



AUSTRALIA DAY

2026

Sunday 25th January

We will hold a best dressed Aussie competition

Prize will be \$50 cash

There will also be an Australia Day themed Raffle to be drawn on the day



Come in and join in the fun !!!
(BYO Snacks)

Membership Update

As at 31st December, 2025:

Service Members:	140
Affiliate Members:	43
Social Members:	<u>94</u>
Total:	<u>277</u>

Renewals were due on 31st December, and forms are on the Notice Board.

Service Members can either renew on line via the RSLWA web-site or alternatively by filling in a Renewal form in the Club.

Affiliate and Social Members can only renew through the Sub-Branch.

Any Members not renewed by 31st January, 2026 will have their Loyalty Cards disabled.

I have not yet had notification from Head Office of any members who may have renewed on line directly through them. On that basis I strongly suggest that you keep receipts as proof that you've paid. It's unfortunate, but I may need to see proof of payment to keep your Loyalty Card active.

Carol King

Tel: 9497 1972

e-mail: secretary@armadalersl.com.au



January Service Members:

Antrobus	Mr	Tom	12/01	Brown	Mr	Chris	04/01
Chadd	Mr	Phil	04/01	Cole	Mr	Allan	06/01
McDonald	Mr	Michael	24/01	Paul	Mr	Volker	03/01
Power	Mr	Michael	03/01	Sarti	Mr	Ross	08/01
Tippett	Mr	John	08/01	Welch	Mr	Eric	06/01
Whittick	Mr	George	16/01				

January Affiliate Members:

Hodge	Mr	Barry	25/01	Jessett	Mr	Steve	11/01
Kirkpatrick	Mr	William	08/01				

January Social Members:

Adkins	Ms	Karen	26/01	Baldwin	Mr	Reece	16/01
Cowie	Mrs	Jan	06/01	Davenport	Mr	Keven	24/01
Hunt	Mr	Chris	02/01	Northcott	Mrs	Sharon	09/01
Rees	Ms	Brooke	24/01	Roche	Mr	Aemonn	30/01
Scott	Mrs	Teena	19/01	Smith	Ms	Michelle	14/01
Wangai	Mr	Cyrus	14/01				

If there are any errors or anyone has been missed off the list, please advise

The Secretary (Interim Membership Officer)

These members may collect a free drink of their choice during the month

We hope you have a very special Birthday

Bar Manager's Report

G'day All,

On 12th January our costs are increasing but I'm feeling confident we won't need to change our prices just yet.

Sales have been a bit dismal lately but hopefully it will change in the New Year.

Cheers for now,

Stormy





**I just got over my
addiction to chocolate,
marshmallows and nuts.**

**I won't lie, it was a
Rocky Road.**



Germany's mobile army on two wheels: Over 600,000 motorcycles in World War II - from the Lightning War to the collapse of the Eastern Front



A liberated Jew holds a Nazi at gunpoint, 1945



*"An Australian Light Horseman collecting anemones near Belah in Palestine".
Picture: Frank Hurley, 1918*

Image: Australian soldiers march past the Australian Soldiers' Club in Jerusalem, Anzac Day 1942.





when you come home from
the pub 4 hours late and
she gives you this look





In 1943, the B-17 Flying Fortress Memphis Belle completed its mission over the skies.

Memphis Belle is not a symbol of luck. From her first mission to her last sortie, she and the 10 people inside endured gunfire, enemy fighters, anti-aircraft artillery, and malfunctions that could have claimed their lives at any moment.

Before each mission, they always reminded each other of a simple but chilling phrase:

"If only one plane returns today..."



HMAS VENDETTA, (destroyer), was Navy gunfire ship for US II Corps' operations in Vietnam



An officer's cap made from an 18-pound cartridge case with the cockade of the Australian Armed Forces. Dated 1916

From Cooperation to Conflict:

How Australia Lost Control of its Northern Approaches, 1901-1941

Cooperation

On 30 January 1902, the British and Japanese government representatives signed the Anglo-Japanese Alliance, ending Great Britain's era of 'splendid isolation'. Coming just over a year after Australian Federation, the alliance:

was, on the whole, received in Australian political and commercial circles 'with marked expressions of approval.' The Alliance was seen as a check against a Russian fleet from Vladivostok or a German fleet from the Chinese Sea, and as a guarantee to the trading interests of Australia in the Far East.

The fledgling Australian Government's relief proved short-lived. The 1904–05 Russo-Japanese War coincided with the withdrawal of Britain's five China Station battleships to the North Sea to redress the balance against Germany, presenting Australia with a greatly changed security environment. Three weeks after the decisive Japanese naval victory over Imperial Russia at the Battle of Tsushima, Australia's Prime Minister, Alfred Deakin, 'chief architect of her defence and foreign policy', identified Japan as a 'defence threat' for the first time.

Those concerns did not prevent London from renewing and expanding the alliance's scope in mid-1905 and 1911. But as war with Germany loomed, the Australian Government did not embrace the prospect of Anglo-Japanese naval cooperation with enthusiasm:

When in an important speech on 17 March 1914 [then First Lord of the Admiralty] Winston Churchill asked for Australian and New Zealand Dreadnoughts to strengthen the decisive theatre in Europe, he based himself on the premise that Australia was adequately protected by the Anglo-Japanese alliance. Australian leaders, however, were flabbergasted by Churchill's implication that the Pacific was to be made safe by the treaty with a nation whose people they did not admit to their shores.

When the Great War broke out, 'Australian apprehension that Japan would seize the opportunity to extend her empire further southward' made London initially reluctant to call upon Japanese assistance. But the Royal Navy's commitments to defeating the German High Seas Fleet in the North Sea, securing the Mediterranean and countering the U-Boat war in the northern Atlantic left little capacity for operations in the Pacific. Necessity won out, and the Imperial Japanese Navy (IJN) was asked to reduce the German fleet base at Tsingtao, in north-eastern China, and to hunt down the cruisers based there.

This period saw unprecedented levels of Japanese-Australian naval cooperation, an often cited example of which was the cruiser HIJMS *Ibuki*'s role escorting the first ANZAC troop convoy through the Indian Ocean in November 1914. Around the same time, the pre-dreadnought *Hizen* and the cruisers *Asama* and *Izumo* joined the battlecruiser HMAS *Australia* and the light cruiser HMS *Newcastle* off Mexico's Pacific coast and headed south to search the Galapagos archipelago for the German Pacific Squadron cruisers. Beyond those examples, the IJN committed 12 cruiser sorties to southern patrols in Australian throughout the war's duration, for which the Australian Government has been described as 'less than enthusiastically grateful'.

Competition

The limits of that cooperation quickly emerged, however, when it came to the occupation of Germany's Pacific Ocean territories. By 24 September 1914, the hastily assembled Australian Naval and Military Expeditionary Force (AN&MEF) had secured most of German New Guinea, while a New Zealand force occupied German Samoa at the end of August. On 6 November, a half-company-sized force from the AN&MEF had occupied Nauru. At relatively low cost, these antipodean forces had secured the German territories south of the equator. But the AN&MEF expedition had been at the limits of Australia's military and naval capabilities. Shortcomings in logistics, training and preparedness were masked by the light opposition put up by the small local paramilitary *Polizeitruppe*.

When the British Admiralty enquired whether Australian forces could occupy the more distant German North Pacific territories, the Army raised a third AN&MEF battalion-sized force, dubbed the 'Tropical Force', in November. The commitment of the available naval escorts, troopships and coal to the first ANZAC convoy from Australia delayed the Tropical Force's availability.

While the Australians tarried, the Japanese did not. Prompted by a request from the British Admiralty, but acting virtually independently of the Japanese Government, IJN landing parties seized the Mariana Islands (Saipan), Caroline Islands (Truk, Yap, Kusaie [now Kosrae], Ponape, Palau, Angaur) and Marshall Islands (Jaluit) in October 1914. Although the IJN proposed 'permanent retention of all occupied islands', the Japanese Government was not initially committed to their long-term possession. When Tokyo offered to hand Yap over, the Australian authorities were unable to find the necessary escorts for such a convoy, and cheekily enquired whether the IJN could provide that support. Tokyo's position soon changed when domestic Japanese sentiment was aroused, and:

Riots emerged in Tokyo when it was learned that the government was prepared to hand over the Micronesian islands to their allies. The commotion caused the Japanese Government to retract its offer, and on 23 November, Britain asked Australia not to proceed to any islands north of the Equator.

Anglo-Japanese cooperation was now transforming to become Japanese-Australian competition in the Pacific:

In these embarrassing circumstances the Commonwealth Government perceived a divided duty. On the one hand it did not wish to adopt a policy which would cause difficulties to the Imperial Government; on the other hand it considered that Australia had geographical and strategic claims to the occupancy of these islands, possession of which by any Power other than Great Britain would profoundly affect the trend of Australia's naval defence policy in the future.

A 3 December telegram from the British Government was even more conclusive:

... as Pelew, Mariana, Caroline Islands, and Marshall Islands are at present in military occupation by Japanese who are at our request engaged in policing waters Northern Pacific, we consider it most convenient for strategic reasons to allow them to remain in occupation for the present, leaving whole question of future to be settled at the end of war. We should be glad therefore if the Australian expedition would confine itself to occupation of German islands south of the equator.

Thus, the AN&MEF Tropical Force expedition, 'which had been so completely fitted out that it even carried with it postage-stamps overprinted "N.W. Pacific," came to an end before it sailed'.

Confrontation

The end of the First World War and the peace initiatives that followed inadvertently increased Australian-Japanese cooperation. In 1919, Australia stridently opposed Japan's Racial Equality Proposal at the Paris Peace Conference. Then in 1922 Japan was forced to return Tsingtao to the Republic of China, while the conclusion of the Washington Naval Treaty saw Britain annul the Anglo-Japanese treaty and decline to support Japan's demand for closer naval parity with the Royal Navy and the US Navy.

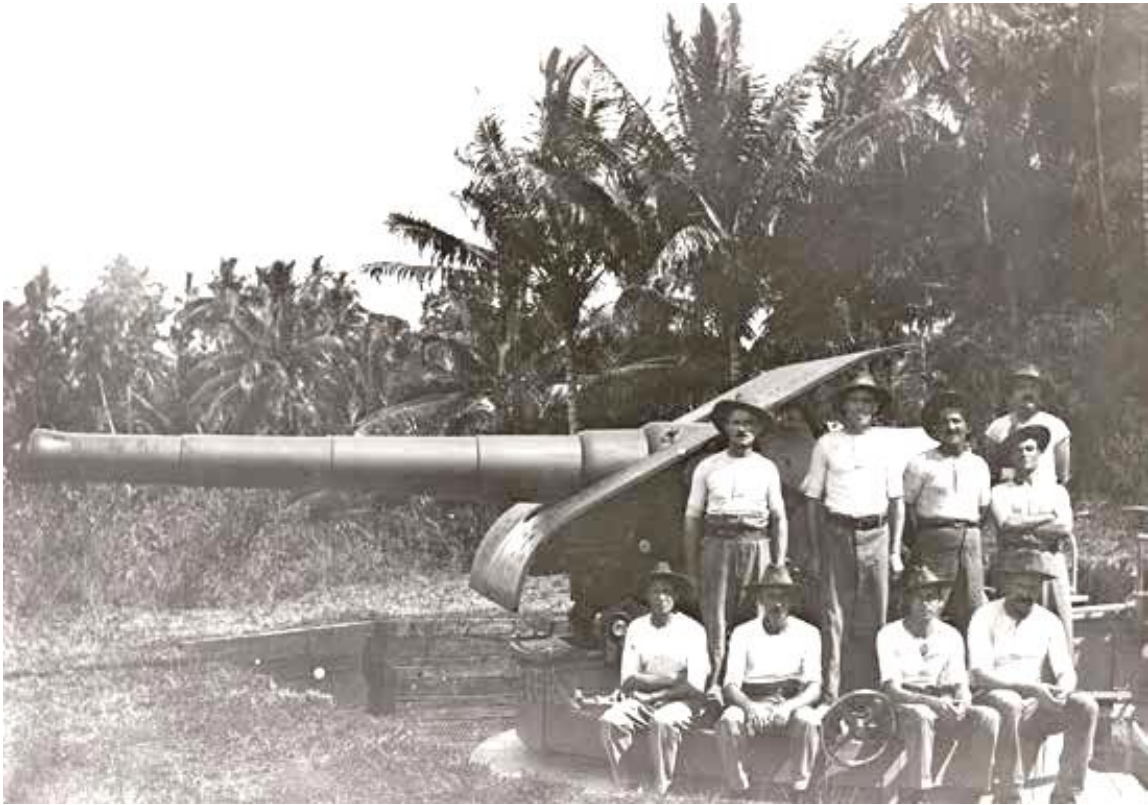
The League of Nations—the forerunner to the modern United Nations—awarded Australia and Japan mandates over the former German Pacific territories. But that mandate required that these territories were not militarised, forbidding their fortification or the establishment of armed forces there.

So in 1922 the Australian Army decommissioned the 6-inch coastal defence battery it had installed at Rabaul four years earlier and avoided raising local militia forces when the garrison was withdrawn.

From the early 1930s Japan was increasingly seen as an aggressor state. The League of Nations determined that Imperial Japanese Army officers had staged the 1931 Mukden Incident as a pretext for the invasion of north-eastern China, known as Manchuria.

After the League of Nations General Assembly prepared to condemn Japan as an aggressor in February 1933, Tokyo gave formal notice of its withdrawal from the League. Similar incidents in Shanghai (1932) and later the 1937 Marco Polo Bridge Incident led to the Second Sino-Japanese War. Japan occupied Hainan in 1939 and then French Indochina in September 1940.

In 1936, Japan also withdrew from the negotiations for a successor to the Washington Naval Treaty.



Rabaul, c. 1914. A krupp gun with a step swagged barrel. An Australian gun crew pose beside it

While successive Australian governments recognised the increasing Japanese threat, they did not invest in the capabilities needed for the Army to defend Australia's northern approaches. That growing threat coincided with the Royal Navy's further withdrawal from East Asia, starting with the closure of its forward naval base from Weihaiwei (near Tsingtao) in 1930. Under the emerging Singapore strategy, the Singapore 'fortress' would be defended until a Royal Navy fleet arrived to sally north to relieve or recapture Hong Kong and then blockade Japan to force Tokyo to accept terms.

Despite that strategy, the Australian Army focused its force planning on the establishment of a Second Australian Imperial Force (AIF) which, like the AIF of the First World War, would comprise infantry and light horse formations equipped to fight in Europe or the Middle East. At the same time, the Army confronted the block obsolescence of its artillery and small arms, a by-product of having relied for two decades on the surplus remaining from the First World War.

Scant regard was given to the emerging demands of modern warfare, let alone any requirement to fight in the South-East Asian or South-West Pacific littoral.

Nowhere was this more evident than in the shortfalls of the weapons systems needed to defend against enemy air and naval forces. Nor did the Australian Army seek to exercise in the region to determine how and where best to deploy forces and sustain them in the unfamiliar South-East Asian and South-West Pacific regions. There was no meaningful engagement, let alone training, with regional US, French, Dutch or Portuguese forces. Nor did the Army realise the potential of indigenous forces such as those later raised in Papua and New Guinea.

Anti-aircraft guns were in especially short supply. By the end of 1940, only 40 3.7-inch anti-aircraft guns had been produced; by November 1941, that figure had reached 165 guns, 'but without predictors', which were not manufactured in Australia, 'they were of limited value'. Modern 40 mm Bofors guns were requested from Great Britain, but production there could not meet British demands, let alone those of the rest of the Empire.

From 1934, Australia's coastal defences were reinforced, including by the acquisition of 9.2-inch guns, which could outrange and outgun Japanese heavy cruisers that might raid key Australian ports. Those heavier weapons could not be spared for the northern approaches, however, and it was not until July 1939 that a 6-inch battery was installed at Port Moresby. Similarly, it was not until an infantry company from the 15th Battalion arrived in July 1940 that Papua New Guinea could claim to have even the most rudimentary garrison. A key factor that delayed the dispatch of these forces was the absence of the infrastructure needed to accommodate even a modest force.

To remediate these shortages, in October 1941 the Australian Government requested that the US Government provide, under the Lend-Lease program, weapons and equipment to thicken Australia's coastal defences in the South-West Pacific. For example, the Australian Government planned to turn Base F—as Washington referred to Rabaul—into a forward base for a counter-offensive against the Japanese base at Truk. In October 1941, the US Government was requested to provide six 7-inch guns, eight 3-inch anti-aircraft guns, an anti-submarine harbour boom defence net and radio direction-finding equipment (i.e. radar). But, as events proved, these would not be ready in time for the Japanese attack. Even if they had been, more time would have been needed to train crews in their use.

Wartime conscription and a manpower shortage meant the potential of indigenous troops also received belated attention. Infantry battalions were gradually raised in Papua (from June 1940), the Torres Strait Islands (from May 1941), the Northern Territory (February 1942) and New Guinea (from March 1944). While these units proved effective, much time was needed for their establishment and training. It was not until mid-1942 that the Papuan Infantry Battalion participated in significant combat operations (whereas the Torres Strait Light Infantry Battalion, the 2/1st North Australia Observer Unit and the Northern Territory Special Reconnaissance Unit did not see significant combat). Had these units been raised earlier, their contribution to the war might have been even greater.

Conflict

War with Germany highlighted the inadequacy of the Australian Army's inter-war preparations. As in the First World War, Royal Australian Navy (RAN) ships, Army's Second AIF divisions, and Royal Australian Air Force (RAAF) combat squadrons were spread across the globe in defence of the Atlantic and the UK, the Mediterranean, the Middle East and the Indian Ocean.

This left few resources for the Pacific where, aside from the looming Japanese threat, German commerce raiders were active. In December 1940, the German armed merchant ships *Komet* and *Orion* sank five merchant ships around the Australian-administered island of Nauru and damaged the island's phosphate-loading facilities. The most resistance shown was when Nauru's Administrator, Frederick Chalmers, who had commanded the 27th Battalion in the First World War, 'stormed along the sea-front shouting at the enemy'. Those raids demonstrated the vulnerability of Nauru and the nearby British-controlled, and similarly phosphate-rich, Ocean Island, both of which were important to the British Empire's war economy.

Even had the British Empire's navies and air forces not been heavily committed to operations across all theatres, land-based coastal defences represented an economical and effective way of defending these outer islands. But the decades of under-investment left the Army without adequate resources to protect Australian interests in the region. The Army planned to install a pair of 6-inch coastal defence guns on Nauru and a second pair on Ocean Island to deter further raids.

All that could be spared, however, were two detachments (known as Wren Force and Heron Force) equipped with a pair of obsolete 18-pounder field guns each.

As its strategic circumstances worsened, the Australia Government attempted its own last-minute diplomacy and reconsidered cooperation with—or at least appeasement of—Japan. Following what has been described as the ‘tiptoe policy’, the Menzies Government urged London to temporarily close the Burma Road in the summer of 1940 to appease Tokyo, while continuing exports of iron ore and other ‘war material’ to Japan. Australia’s first ambassador to Tokyo, Sir John Latham, even suggested that Australia offer to buy Japanese military aircraft, and ‘for a few months promising negotiations with Mitsubishi proceeded’.



Rabaul, New Britain. 13 September 1914. German civilian residents watching Australian Naval and Military Expeditionary Force (AN&MEF) troops marching through Rabaul as they take control of German New Guinea

The die was cast in December 1941 when Japan attacked Pearl Harbor and US bases in the Philippines. At the same time Japanese forces raided Singapore, invaded Malaya and sank the Royal Navy battleship *Prince of Wales* and battlecruiser *Repulse*, which had been deployed to Malaya to underpin the Singapore strategy. Those strikes were made possible by Japan’s possession of the former German Pacific territories.

Imperial Japanese Navy (IJN) bases in the Marshall Islands supported the attacks on Pearl Harbor, Wake Island, and later Nauru and Ocean Island; Palau supported the invasion of the Philippines; Saipan in the Marianas supported the invasion of Guam; and Truk - the IJN 4th Fleet's home port since 1939—was the base for IJN amphibious landings at Rabaul and Kavieng in New Guinea.

The Australian Army too had deployed forces across the northern approaches. The AIF 8th Division—only one of four AIF divisions—and other AIF and militia units spanned a 7,500 km arc from Malaya, Singapore, Timor (Sparrow Force), Ambon (Gull Force), Port Moresby (30th Brigade), New Britain and New Ireland (Lark Force), Nauru (Wren Force) and Ocean Island (Heron Force). These latter forces constituted what was soon called an 'advanced observation line'—a picket line that would maintain forward air bases for aerial reconnaissance.

Sparrow, Gull and Lark forces were each based around an AIF infantry battalion, but they were not combined arms teams. Lark Force was the best equipped, with a coastal defence battery of two 6-inch guns and a pair of obsolete 3-inch anti-aircraft guns and an independent company— the Army's first deployment of commandos. But even this force had been designed:

... to deal with the situation as prevailing in 1940–41, viz. fleeting bombardment raid by, at most, one or two armed merchantmen. The problem of air attack or sea bombardment on a Pacific War scale was not budgeted for since sufficient coast guns and anti-aircraft guns were not available for the more important main-land ports let alone Rabaul.'

Thus, Lark Force—indeed all the 'Bird Forces'—lacked field artillery and, even though there was a battery minus of anti-tank guns, the battalion's Bren Gun Carriers constituted Lark Force's only armoured vehicles.

The speed of Japan's advance into South-East Asia and across the Pacific forced reconsideration of Army's forward deployments. The Australian Government agreed to further reinforce the strategically vital Singapore 'fortress', but conceded that Wren and Heron forces were too weak to deter the IJN. They were withdrawn to Australia in February 1942, ceding Nauru and Ocean Island to uncontested Japanese occupation in August and allowing the IJN to extend its reach into the South Pacific and towards the vital US–Australia sea lanes.

In considering the fate of the remaining three Bird Forces, the Australian Government and Army hedged their bets. They agreed that US aid would not arrive in time but felt that, even if the Government was unable to reinforce these forces, they could not be abandoned. To have done so would have been to cede to the Japanese the harbours and airfields that lay across Australia's northern approaches. These were needed both to protect Singapore's eastern flank and for a future Allied counter-offensive into the North Pacific. Moreover, the Government was concerned lest the Bird Forces' withdrawal discourage the Dutch from defending the Netherlands East Indies.

This left the third option: for the garrisons to remain with only such reinforcements as could be spared in the time available. Not only were combat-ready troops unavailable but also the RAN's commitments to other theatres meant that neither warships nor transports were available. In their stead, the Australian authorities despatched the meagre RAAF assets that could be found and deployed quickly. Unable to reinforce, and both unable and unwilling to withdraw, the three Bird Forces remained where they were. As the Chief of Naval Staff noted in a dispatch to the Australian Ambassador in Washington about Lark Force, 'It is considered better to maintain Rabaul as an advanced air operational base, its present small garrison being regarded as hostages to fortune.'

Isolated and incapable of supporting each other with the weapons available to them, the three garrisons suffered the same fate. Lark Force ceased to be a fighting force within hours of the Japanese landing at Rabaul on 23 January 1942. Gull Force surrendered on 3 February, and then Sparrow Force on 23 February.

Only the commandos were able to continue fighting. On East Timor, the 2/2nd Independent Company withdrew towards East Timor's south coast and pursued a guerrilla campaign until the end of the year. Lark Force's 1st Independent Company also performed its stay-behind role admirably, even after the loss of its headquarters at Kavieng, New Ireland, on 23 January. That company's remaining detachments—fewer than three platoons—maintained their surveillance outposts at key points along a nearly 3,000 km arc extending from Seeadler Harbour on Manus Island through Namatanai in central New Ireland, Buka Passage in Bougainville, Tulagi in the Central Solomons, and Port Vila in Vanuatu.

From those outposts, the commandos undertook presence and reconnaissance patrols, established observation posts, and supported the RAN Coastwatchers network, laying the foundations for their M Special Unit successors. Last to withdraw were the commandos at Tulagi, who supported the RAAF seaplane and wireless base there until the eve of the IJN's 3 May 1942 invasion which triggered the Guadalcanal campaign.

More than 2,000 Lark, Sparrow and Gull Force soldiers were killed or died in Japanese captivity. In the counter-offensives that followed, US forces bypassed Timor, Ambon and Rabaul as they took the shortest road to Tokyo, but other locations such as Tulagi, Saipan, Palau and Kwajalein had to be retaken from the Japanese at great cost.

Moreover, had the German Pacific territories not been ceded to Japan in 1914, the IJN's opening offensives of the Pacific War would have necessarily been changed in scope and reach.

Conclusion

In the first two decades that followed Federation, Australia's security relationship with Japan transitioned from awkward cooperation to an emerging competition.

Upon the First World War's outbreak, Australia found itself reliant on maritime security from the country it identified as the most direct threat to national security.

That reliance both underscored and masked the limits of protection the Royal Navy could provide Australia in the event of a major conflict.

In 1914, it was the limits of that indigenous naval force that forced the Australian Government to cede control of the central Pacific to Japan.

Australia had the troops, but not the naval transports and escorts needed to occupy Imperial Germany's North Pacific territories north of the equator.



Babiang, New Guinea, 1944. The speed of Japan's advance into south-east Asia and across the Pacific forced reconsideration of Army's forward deployments

The First World War's ashes had barely settled before Australia's cooperative security relationship with Japan further transitioned through competition into confrontation. But Australia did not use the inter-war period to prepare for littoral warfare in South-East Asia and the Pacific. Saddled with war debt and in the face of the Great Depression, successive governments under-invested in defence, including the land-based air and sea defences that could have added substance to the advanced observation line established across South-East Asia and the South-West Pacific.

Nor did the Army engage with prospective regional partners to offset its weaknesses, instead trusting that its traditional place in the British Empire provided the security guarantees needed. And, adhering to the conditions of the League of Nations mandate until the mid-1940s, nor did Australia raise local militia forces in the former German New Guinea, let alone indigenous ones.

As Washington had recognised, the advanced observation line included naval and air bases needed for a future counter-offensive against Japan. Properly defended, bases like Rabaul threatened the IJN's forward bases in the former German Pacific territories, but in their largely indefensible state the Australian bases were vulnerable to attacks from those Japanese bases. Land-based forces were needed to provide the persistent defence of these bases to allow naval and air forces to concentrate where they were most needed. Those land forces needed to be composed of combined arms, equipped with anti-aircraft and coastal defence artillery to contest the airspace and waters around them. When the Government belatedly recognised those needs, the required weapons were in short supply and not available in the time frames needed. Without them, the fates of the Army units deployed to cover Australia's northern approaches were left to fortune.

The Australian Army faces many of these challenges today. Advances in transportation, weapons and communications technologies have eroded the security buffer once provided by the Pacific Ocean's vastness. Regional powers vie for and fortify contested reefs and islands as naval powers compete for control of the Western Pacific.

Accelerated Warfare describes these challenges and the need for partnering, cooperation and jointness to mitigate these security challenges. Increasingly the Australian Defence Force has the joint capabilities needed to transport, protect and sustain land-based task groups at such remote locations, and to contest control of the air and sea around them. Moreover Army, as part of that joint force, has strengthened engagement with regional and non-traditional partners.

In addition to building partner force capacity across the region, Army has invested in indigenous and special forces for the domestic and overseas regional surveillance and reconnaissance roles.

At the same time, Army is replacing or upgrading the armoured component of its combined-arms capability, and has announced surface-to-air missile upgrades that now extend engagement ranges beyond those attained in the pre-missile era. Army is also examining long-range fire options that could replace the coastal defence capability disbanded in 1962. Such changes provide Australia with the capability not only to contest its northern approaches before cooperation, competition and confrontation transition into conflict but also to deter such an escalation in the first place.



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