

Coming home

Special issue proposal for *History Australia* (Edition 16.1)



AUSTRALIAN WAR MEMORIAL

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“At Sea. September 1919. A boxing match aboard the Australian transport ship *Barambah* (A37) which was carrying Quota No 65 of Australian troops returning home to Australia”, AWM, public domain.

Guest Editors

Dr. Bart Ziino (Deakin University)

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Demobilising from total war was as much a psychological as a military and economic process. The extraordinary mobilisation of people, finance, images, emotions and sentiments that occurred between 1914 and 1918 could not simply be put into reverse, but required what John Horne has called ‘cultural demobilisation’. Here, the mindset of total war and its attendant will to violence had to be reconfigured, enemies rehabilitated, and the meaning of sacrifice negotiated. This was a contested project of coming to terms with the experience of war for civilians and soldiers alike.

No less than in Europe, Australians were also obliged to confront that process. This special issue of *History Australia* examines the difficult and often lengthy processes of demobilisation in their military and civil contexts. Tens of thousands of Australian soldiers and nurses had been absent from distant homes for up to five years. The return and reintegration of service personnel was laden with personal, familial and communal efforts to negotiate not only the transition to peace, but the shape and meaning of ‘peacetime’. Demobilisation required an effort at readjustment, of recognising and evaluating the experience through which Australians had passed. How did soldiers and nurses prepare to make the transition from active military service? How successful were Australians at dismantling wartime mentalities? How did the war persist into private and public life?

This special issue offers an opportunity to re-examine the shifting processes not just of return and resumption, but of reformulation, as Australians – in common with all belligerents – negotiated their way out of total war. Potential themes for contributors include, but are not limited to:

- Homecoming – What did Australians do between leaving the front line in October 1918 and re-embarkation to Australia? What was their experience of sea journeys or their expectations? And their experience of disembarkation, welcoming parades and return to their local community?
- Reunion with family – How did children react to the return of fathers and brothers? How did intimacy resume amongst married servicemen and their wives? How were war brides received in Australia? What expectations, hopes and fears did families and local communities entertain of reunion?
- Return to civil society – What was the nature of the personal transition between soldiering and return to civil society? What were the perspectives of those at home who encountered those returning? How did they cope? How did they receive the maimed and the wounded?
- Political culture – How did the war affect the language and practice of politics after 1918?
- Sacrifice – What contests played out over the meanings of sacrifice? How did various groups articulate claims to entitlement, and to what ends?
- Violence – What were the meanings of violence in its manifold forms in 1919 and beyond? Did the reintegration of combatants in civil society raise issues in terms of criminality or domestic violence?
- Enemies – In what ways did the war's conceptions of enemies – external and internal – continue to have their effects? How/to what extent were enemies rehabilitated?
- Empire and White Australia – Did Australian assertions of their ties with Empire and commitment to a White Australia insulate Australia from the reformulation of international relations?
- Internationalism – What place did Australians' participation in internationalist organisations and forums have in the processes of demobilising?
- Returning to work – Did service in the war increase chances of employment? How did voluntary organisations and their workers transition out of the war? Were soldier settlements successful?
- Art and literature – How did artists' and writers' representations of the war assist or restrain cultural demobilisation?
- How do Australian experiences and attitudes towards demobilisation compare to those in other parts of the world confronting the same process?

Proposals should include a title, a short abstract (**400 words** maximum) and a short biography of the author. Proposals can be submitted to the editors by **15 August 2017** at bart.ziino@deakin.edu.au and romain.fathi@flinders.edu.au. If selected, articles of no more than 10,000 words (including footnotes) will be required by 1 February 2018.

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