

Worksheet



War has been a major force in shaping Australia over the last century. Over one million Australians have taken part in wars, and over 100,000 of these have died.

All other Australians have been affected by this.

There has been much written about people's experiences during war, but what about after the war? What have the effects of war been on the returning warriors, their families, and the welcoming nation?

This article brings together a number of pieces of evidence from Australia's three major wars—World War 1, World War 2 and Vietnam—to help students explore this topic.

The evidence is presented in three different collections—one for each of these major wars. As

students work through one or more of these collections, they should try and organise the evidence around the headings in the table below, and then use that evidence to answer the question **'How was Australia affected by war?'** In each case there will need to be further research to answer this question fully, but students will find that the evidence provided presents a solid base for this further research.

Questions have been placed with groups of documents to help students focus on some of the key ideas that they raise.

Aspect of the impact of war	Issues to consider	World War 1	World War 2	Vietnam War
A The returning servicemen and servicewomen	What were the effects on them physically, mentally, socially, and on their lives, careers and friendships?			
B Their families	What were the effects on wives or husbands, and children growing up without their fathers, and then having them come back in their lives?			
C The Australian economy	What were the costs and benefits to Australia?			
D Australian society and identity	Did the war unify society, or create divisions and resentments? Did it do both, in different ways?			

World War 1

Identity

Q1 What is this document suggesting about the impact of the war on Australia?

Source

1

A speech for Peace Day 1919 by General White

Australia rides safely in harbor to-day, a new nation. Five years ago the world barely knew her. To-day, the men who went to fight for her have placed her high in the world's regard ... She has been given a place in the conference of nations; the great world has recognised her right to mould her future as she pleases.

Bill Gammage, *The Broken Years*, Penguin, Melbourne, 1990 page 297

Repatriation

Q2 What was the duty of the Department of Repatriation?

What types of support were offered?

What are the economic implications (positive and negative) of these figures for Australia?

Do you think that the nation has a duty to give special care to returned soldiers and the families of those who did not return from war?

Source

2

Senator Millen, Minister for Repatriation, 1919

The duty of the Repatriation Department was to look after the helpless and to restore others to civil life ... there were on the books of the Department today awaiting employment only between 13000 and 14000 men ... Provision had been made for technically training up to 20000 men ... A total of 130140 applications for all sorts of benefits under the repatriation scheme had been received.

Repatriation magazine December 1919

Source

3

Soldier Settlement Scheme cartoon

One scheme was Soldier Settlement. Soldiers were given a grant of land—but generally they did not have a large enough area, nor the skills, nor the necessary financial backing to make the land productive. By 1930 most of the settlement areas had failed totally. The cartoon above which appeared in *The Bulletin*, 23 April, 1919, shows a typical comment on the scheme.



Source

4

Official statistics

Official statistics tell a story of the continuing pain and cost of war. About 2000 soldiers were permanently hospitalised as a result of war wounds. In 1926, 22 742 veterans required periods in hospital, a figure which rose to 49 157 men in 1939 at the outbreak of another world war.

Cheryl Mongan and Richard Reid, 'We have not forgotten', Milltown Research & Publications, Yass, 1998 page 250

Soldiers

Q3 What personal problems do many of the returning soldiers have?

What impacts will the returning soldiers have on the economy?

What impacts do they have on the society they return to?

Source

5

A veteran remembers

I am a soldier teacher who spent four years on active service, and now suffer from an eye injury, received 'over there'... Must I compete with slackers, &c, who are sound in body and limb? If so, then there is little hope for me, as my injury prevents me from studying for further scholarship

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which is necessary for promotion. I have a wife and two children to support, and hope that our country will not forget the promises made to the diggers, whose motto was at all times—'Country first, self last'.

Bill Gammage, *The Broken Years*, Penguin, Melbourne, 1990 page 304

Nurses

Q4 *What personal problems do many of the returning nurses have? What impacts will the returning nurses have on the economy? What impacts do they have on the society they return to?*

Source 6 Ella Tucker, application for a war pension in 1920

After return from Active Service I had 12 months' holiday because I felt unable to work, really a general depression after 4¾ years' continual strain; I have hardly had a good night's sound sleep since my return.

Jan Bassett, *Guns and Brooches*, Oxford University Press, Melbourne, 1992, page 99

Source 7 Winifred Smith, applying for a pension in 1924

I have not been well since demobilization, having contracted Pneumonic Influenza whilst nursing troops (voluntarily... & have been in indifferent health since ... My Husband is an Anzac ... He is partially incapacitated receiving a small pension ... Returning to Australia we found things very changed & the continual ill health of my Husband & myself has drained our slender resources.

Jan Bassett, *Guns and Brooches*, Oxford University Press, Melbourne, 1992, page 103

Families

Q5 *What can we learn from these sources about the impact of the war on families? What might the economic impact of those losses be for Australia? What other social costs or losses might there have been? Do the families seem to accept or to reject involvement in the war?*

Source 8 Headstone inscriptions created by families of Australian dead for overseas war cemeteries

A DINKUM AUSSIE (L-Cpl G.P.Cameron, 12.7.1915 aged 24)

ONE WHO HAS HELPED TO WRITE AUSTRALIAN HISTORY IN BLOOD (Private A.Murray 31.7.1918 aged 33)

AN ANZAC BRAVE IN AN ANZAC GRAVE (Private C.L.Holton, 13.8.1915 aged 19)

A GENTLEMAN AT REST, BEST OF FATHERS AND BEST OF FRIENDS (Private E.H.Leake, 7.7.1917 aged 48)

ONE OF THE BEST, LOVING HUSBAND OF FLORRIE AND DADDIE OF LITTLE EDNA (Gunner L.M.Hayes, 3.11.1916 aged 27)

ONLY THOSE WHO HAVE LOVED AND LOST CAN UNDERSTAND LOVE'S BITTER COST (Gunner T.Pentney, 12.9.1918, aged 39)

MY ONLY CHILD DIES THE EMPIRE LIVES A MOTHER MOURNS (Private W.H.Hicks, 8.12.1916, aged 25)

Source 9 Extracts from poems written by Henry Bourne Higgins on the death of his only son, Mervyn

What has he lost? Mayhap, some fifty years, The joy of children—work, success, defeat.

The pain is of the living, not the dead... For us, in age, a childless home—and tears.

Quoted in Joy Damousi, *The Labour of Loss*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1999 page 51.

Children

Q6 *What do these sources suggest about the continuing impact of the war on children's and other people's lives? How can you reconcile some of the hostile attitudes to soldiers with the claim and attitude expressed in Source 1?*

Source 10 A young man remembers

I was born in 1913 and some of my boy and girl friends are thoroughly sick of war pictures, and especially sick of anything relating to Australian soldiers ...

What we actually see every day till they have got on our nerves are crippled, blind and battered wrecks, with brass badges on, begging in the streets, howling about pension reductions, while their women and children are in dire straits ...

The general opinion among fellows like myself is that Australians were very foolish to let themselves

be lured into going ... none of my friends like returned soldiers.

Labor Daily 25 November 1931 quoted in Bill Gammage, *The Broken Years*, Penguin, Melbourne, 1990 page 304

In the community

Q7 What do these sources suggest about the continuing social repercussions of the war on Australia during the 1920s and 1930s?

Source
11

Cartoon – That Promise

'Melbourne women have been invited to enter the hitherto exclusive Chamber of Finance as bank clerks.' *News item*.

'Many returned soldiers complain that the promise of employers to keep their jobs open has been broken.' *News item*.



BANKER (to returned soldier): 'Yes, yes; possibly I DID say something about keeping your position vacant, but it has lately been capably filled by a charming young woman (to whom wages are no object); and I feel sure that you, as a soldier, will not be so unchivalrous as to ask me to discharge her to reinstate YOU!'

The Worker, 10 February 1916

Source
12

Some evidence from Yass

Roy Williamson

Roy Williamson, wounded in 1918, returned to Yass and married in 1920. Following complications from his injuries, he died on 24 June 1923, aged

28 years, leaving a wife and two small daughters—Joan aged 2 years, and Patricia, aged 9 months.

1931 ANZAC Day address by Reverend Foster

'Those who think the war ended in early 1919 after a brief Armistice are very much mistaken. The cost of the war still continues, not only in heavy taxation, which is a serious drain on the resources of each country, but also in the way in which men are suffering through their bodies being riddled with shrapnel, and in some cases even their minds affected.'

The 'Yass Courier' on the death in 1921 of Isabel Massey

'The shock of the death of her adopted son, Reginald Styles, at Gallipoli in 1915, brought on nervous complaints and she was bed ridden for nearly six years.'

Cheryl Mongan and Richard Reid, *We have not forgotten*, Milltown Research & Publications, Yass, 1998 pages 250, 252

Source
13

Women and employment, 1911 and 1921

Employment category	1911	1921
Upper professional	3159	5644
Graziers, wheat and sheep farmers	1214	1148
Lower professional	38933	50598
Managerial	12261	8314
Self-employed shop proprietors	5021	7032
Other farmers	13099	6364
Clerical and related workers	9637	32750
Armed services and police	0	31
Craftsmen and foremen	88531	85144
Shop assistants	26381	37743
Operatives and process workers	11777	20508
Drivers	719	1216
Personal, domestic and other services	148170	160954
Miners	57	197
Farm and rural workers	708	1830
Labourers	4039	10378
Inadequately defined	4751	6686
TOTAL WORKFORCE	368457	436567

Based on an analysis of census figures in Leonard Broom and F.Lancaster Jones, *Opportunity and Attainment in Australia*, pages 125–8

Use all these sources to add any information and ideas to the table on page 1.

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World War 2

Servicemen

Q8 *What do these documents reveal about the continuing effects of war on individuals? What positive and negative impacts can you identify in these sources? How can you explain why war affects individuals differently?*

Source

14

Reg Saunders remembers

I had a hard time after the war. I used to wake up in the [night] and I'd have my wife by the throat and all sorts of ... things, you know ... Oh no, I wasn't awake, I was fighting the bloody Germans, the Japanese or someone, and I used to be really violent. It didn't happen all the time, but it happened often enough to make me feel terrible about it.

Robert A.Hall, *Fighters From the Fringe*, Aboriginal Studies Press, Canberra, 1995 page 86

Source

15

Life after service

Some three-quarters of [soldiers who responded to interviews] resumed much the same occupation and most of them remained in similar jobs for the rest of their working lives. [Others improved their lives.] Before the war [one man] was a battler who did anything available ... At the end of it he took a course under the Commonwealth Reconstruction Training Scheme and became an optician ... [An ill-educated] country worker and farmhand from the age of 13 years, was given rehabilitation training as a welder, which led him into the engineering industry, accountancy studies, and eventually the establishing of his own business.

John Barrett, *We Were There*, Viking, Melbourne, 1987 page 376

Source

16

A soldier remembers his mates

They had mostly been in their very early twenties when they joined up. Within two years of demobilisation, three of them were imprisoned. In later life, two were in a home for alcoholics, one was burnt to death while drunk, one committed suicide and one was gaoled for raping his daughter. I knew these blokes inside out, and feel that the 'war', 'army'—call it what you like—was the basic cause of their behaviour ... not many turned out to be good husbands or fathers. This might not



be general, I hope not; but that's what happened to many of my mates.

John Barrett, *We Were There*, Viking, Melbourne, 1987 page 335

Servicewomen

Q9 *Would you expect most servicewomen to have happier memories of their war experience than most men? Explain your reasons.*

Source

17

Claire Stevenson on WAAAFs

Many regarded them as the happiest of their lives; all felt they gave them independence—by no means the norm for young women in those days—and lifelong friendships they would never have made otherwise.

Most felt they had helped to win the war, which gave them a warm and patriotic glow of satisfaction. Some felt they had gained educationally ... They enjoyed working with men as members of a team, and many women met their future husbands in this way. Living side by side with other women developed a spirit of 'give and take' which carried over into civilian life.

Claire Stevenson and Honor Darling (eds), *The WAAAF Book*, Hale and Iremonger, Sydney, 1984 page 285

Families

Q10 *How did soldiers' experiences affect others in Australia? Would these be permanent or temporary effects?*

Source

18

Joy Bowral writing to her mother

I've never once seen him in my sleep since he died, and it has been as though he'd gone right away—as though I'd closed a lovely book called 'My brother' and couldn't ever read it again. Well, last night I saw him—but not as he was last time we met. As he was when he was 16. It was so real ... I woke up crying my heart out, but feeling very near to him. If I write any more about it I'll cry again—but it was wonderful Mum; and I know that

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he hasn't gone away—he's only waiting for us all, in all his beautiful youth.

Joy Damousi, *The Labour of Loss*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1999 page 142

Source
19

Lora Higgenbotham remembers her husband

He was never cruel or anything to me or my children ... but our life was totally different ... He wouldn't go back to church with me any more ... When [they] came home from the war ... their nerves were shot to pieces and they just couldn't talk to you.

Joy Damousi, *Living With the Aftermath*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 2001 page 134

Indigenous Australians

Q11 How did the war benefit Australia's Indigenous people? Reg Saunders (in Source 14) was an Aboriginal Australian. How does his experience modify the 'positiveness' of the following documents?

Source
20

Impacts of the war on 'white Australia'

[T]he war had helped to change Aborigines and Islanders forever. War service had given them a taste of equality and a sense of having fulfilled the

duty of a citizen. Many who had served ... had developed their command and organisational skills ... These factors tended to result in Aborigines and Islanders challenging white control of their lives. They had become more assertive—more politicised—in their demands for 'citizen's rights'.

White Australians had changed too. Many white servicemen and women had been deployed to north Australia where they had seen the way Aborigines and Islanders had been forced to live ... [this] left many whites more receptive to improvements in conditions for Aborigines.

Robert A.Hall, *Fighters From The Fringe*, Aboriginal Studies Press, Canberra, 1995 page 196

Women's roles

Q12 Did the war increase the numbers of women in work? Did it change the types of work women did? How do you explain the apparent contradictions in attitudes in Sources 22 and 23? What other information would you need to know if the war changed women's role and position in Australia permanently?

Source
22

Mary Miller, Adelaide

After the war was over there was a gradual dismissal from the factories. The men came back

Source
21

Australian male and female employment Sept 1939, June 1943, June 1944

Area	Males			Females		
	Sept 39	June 43	June 44	Sept 39	June 43	June 44
Defence forces	14000	694000	670000	–	45000	49000
Allied works	–	48000	32000	–	–	–
Munitions bloc	11000	91000	76000	1000	39000	28000
Other war production	–	320000	256000	–	106000	85000
Direct war work	25000	1153000	1034000	1000	190000	162000
Civil manufacturing	400000	118000	184000	149000	82000	516000
Rural industries	500000	382000	400000	20000	39000	40000
Other employment	1180000	866000	902000	474000	496000	516000
Total civilian & indirect war	2080000	1366000	1486000	643000	617000	663000
Total employment	2105000	2519000	2520000	644000	807000	825000

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and took the jobs that the women had obtained and women went back to the usual women's jobs—secretary, typist, shop assistant, waitress and so on ... So we were really pressured out of our jobs.

Joanna Penglase and David Horner, *When the War Came to Australia*, Allen & Unwin, Sydney, 1992 page 242

Source
23

Beattie Crawford, Melbourne

When the war was over, I went back to being a clerk in the Bourke Street store of Coles. I didn't mind because it was made perfectly clear to us when we were made managers that it was for the duration of the war only. You've got to remember that women were second-rate employees and we didn't argue with it. Women just weren't given these opportunities and we didn't worry about it, it was accepted in those days.

Joanna Penglase and David Horner, *When the War Came to Australia*, Allen & Unwin, Sydney, 1992 page 242

Identity

Q13 *What is the significance of this statement by the Prime Minister? Can it be seen as an assertion of independence, or more as the 'flea swapping dogs'?*

Source
24

Prime Minister John Curtin: 'Australia looks to America'

The Australian Government ... regards the Pacific struggle as primarily one in which the United States and Australia must have the fullest say in the direction of the democracies' fighting plan. Without any inhibitions of any kind, I make it quite clear that Australia looks to America, free of any pangs as to our traditional links of kinship with the United Kingdom. We know the problems that the United Kingdom faces. We know the constant threat of invasion ... We are therefore determined

that Australia shall not go, and we shall exert all our energies towards the shaping of a plan, with the United States as its keystone, which will give to our country some confidence of being able to hold out until the tide of battle swings against the enemy.

Melbourne Herald 27 December 1941

Economy

Q14 *Why did the war change the nature of the Australian economy?*

Source
25

Economy

During the war Australia had to expand its secondary industries to provide equipment to the Australian and the Allied war effort. In this process:

- output rates were increased;
- more technologically-advanced capital-intensive industries developed;
- producers moved away from Britain as a market and towards the United States and Asia;
- workers acquired higher skill levels;
- primary industries became less significant in the economy;
- wages increased; and
- there was a need to attract migrant labour after the war to develop national infrastructure.

Based on Marnie Haig-Muir and Roy Hay, 'The economy at war', in Joan Beaumont (ed), *Australia's War 1939-1945*, Allen & Unwin, Sydney, 1996 pages 130-132

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The Vietnam War

Soldiers and their families



Q15 How does the war seem to have affected these returned Australians?

Source 26 A Vietnam nurse's experience

I became withdrawn, serious and unable to laugh ... I was always hyper-alert, and had debilitating migraines.

My Vietnam experience changed my whole outlook on life ... I would often say 'life sucks!', which was an exasperated expression of indescribable memories of my Vietnam experiences ['One day as I cut through a boy's bootlace and trouser leg, half his leg came off with his boot. I thought 'Oh God! I've pulled his leg off!' The wound hadn't been recognised because it was full of blood, mud, dirt and grass.] I internalised so much that it created a 'war' within which I didn't know how to fight.

By 1984 I was tired of running, and simply wanted to hide. My relationship with [my husband] was deteriorating ...

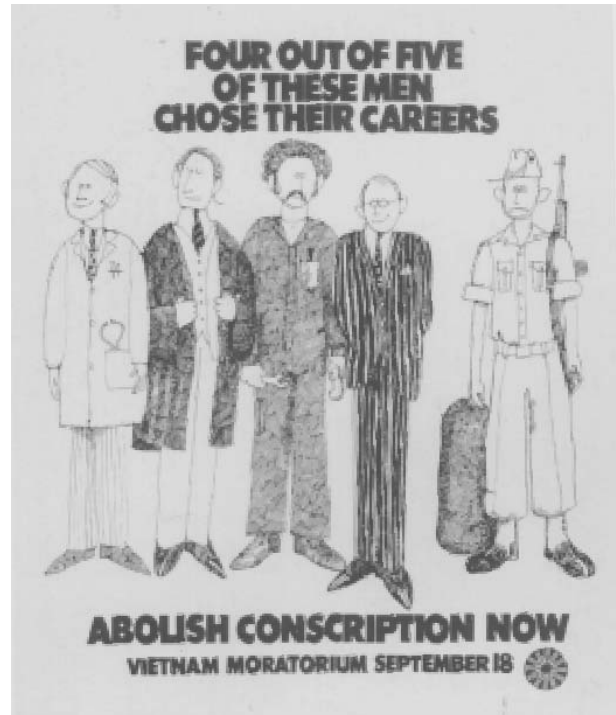
[Then one day in 1987] a veteran asked me if I had [Post Traumatic Stress Disorder] like many of his mates. 'How do I know?' I enquired. 'Well, Sister, do you have flashbacks, nightmares, difficulty sleeping, get anxious, feel isolated, have outbursts of anger and don't trust people?' 'God', I replied, 'you've just summed up seventeen years of my life!'

Glen D. Edwards, *Vietnam: The War Within*, self-published, Salisbury, 1992

Source 27 Wife of a returned serviceman

He had definitely changed. He was intolerant of the slightest noise from the children. He smacked them hard enough to leave welts which was most unlike him. On one occasion, he forced our five-year-old daughter to watch him gut a rabbit. She was extremely distressed, but he still made her stay there and watch. He'd never been cruel like that before. He must have been dreaming as well because he would thrash about and yell in his sleep and wake up sweating.

Noel Giblett (ed), *Homecomings. Stories from Australia's Vietnam Veterans and their Wives*, AGPS, 1990 page 37



Source 28 Vietnam War disability pensioners 30 June 2000

20382 of the 50000 who served in the war were on a disability pension, which is defined as having a war-caused or defence-caused incapacity.

Commonwealth Year Book 2001 page 272

The Agent Orange controversy

Agent Orange was one of many chemicals used to destroy vegetation in Vietnam, to make it harder for the Viet Cong to operate as guerrillas. Areas where Australian soldiers operated were sprayed. There were also many chemicals sprayed to control mosquitoes around the Australian camps. Many people in Vietnam, America and Australia believe that exposure to such chemicals has caused abnormally high rates of disease and genetic harm to many veterans and now their children. A Royal Commission in 1985 found that this was not the case. The Vietnam Veterans' Association of Australia says that the Royal Commission finding was wrong. The VVAA insist that members suffer a greater rate of damage than

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The Vietnam War

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is normal, due to the use of herbicides such as Agent Orange.

Q16 *Do you think that the Australian Government ought to be responsible for any damage caused to its soldiers and nurses by chemicals, even if that damage was caused accidentally?*

Source
29

Letter from a returned serviceman joining the Vietnam Veterans' Association

My wife and I have had 3 children. The first baby, a girl, was stillborn, full term ... My second child, a boy, is now nearly 4. He has no physical deformities, but had a breathing problem at birth. Our third child, also a boy, is now 2. He was born with severe club feet. He has had 2 operations and walks quite well now. The only explanation we were given was that it may be a congenital thing, but nobody in either of our families has such a condition.

Edward Symons in Ambrose Crowe, *The Battle After the War. The story of Australia's Vietnam Veterans*, Allen & Unwin, Sydney, 1999 page 104

Source
30

Vietnam death and sickness rates

Comparing Vietnam male veterans' mortality and morbidity with their non-Vietnam cohort, there is evidence of:

- excess mortality
- 30 per cent higher death rate from lung cancer
- 50 per cent higher death rate for head, neck and prostate cancer
- 14–21 per cent higher suicide rate
- breast cancer rates ten times greater
- leukaemia and colon cancers three times greater
- depressive disorders between 20 and 200 per cent greater
- up to eleven times the expected rate of congenital disorders in their children
- spina bifida ten times higher
- missing body parts significantly higher
- deaths by suicide by children of veterans three times higher.

A study of female Vietnam veterans also found statistically significant excess in veterans for:

- asthma
- breast cancer
- heart disease
- live births with labour complications
- still births
- total of all cancers

Ambrose Crowe, *The Battle After the War. The story of Australia's Vietnam Veterans*, Allen & Unwin, Sydney, 1999 pages 179–180.

Social acceptance or rejection

Q17 *There seems to be a strong need by many soldiers and nurses and their families for society to accept and acknowledge their war service. Why do you think this is considered so important?*

Why might it not be so important to all returned soldiers and nurses?

Source
31

A family's experience

Each in our own way, not only my husband but each of our children and myself have experienced our own hurts and hell—mental, physical and spiritual. There was not only the worry of the separation during two consecutive services in Vietnam but the devastating and destructive impact afterwards on our family and marital happiness ... People we thought cared and loved us turned their backs on this survivor and his family because of that unpopular, politically motivated conflict ... They condemned Vietnam vets to live in hell, bitterness and condemnation for the rest of their lives. Years of hell that almost destroyed our family.

Noel Giblett (ed), *Homecomings. Stories from Australia's Vietnam Veterans and their Wives*, AGPS, 1990 page 63

Source
32

The wife of a returned serviceman on the Welcome Home Parade, 1987

Looking back on the parade there is no doubt that it unlocked something inside many veterans. Call it emotional healing. Call it a Welcome Home. The fact is that many of them are now able to stand up and say, 'I'm a Vietnam veteran'.

Noel Giblett (ed), *Homecomings. Stories from Australia's Vietnam Veterans and their Wives*, AGPS, 1990 page 67

Source
33

Bruce Scott on the Welcome Home Parade

At the Welcome Home parade in 1987, we really welcomed ourselves home. About 25 000 people marched and 100 000 lined the route. Most of that 100 000 were family and friends of the marchers. They get more people every year to a grand final in Melbourne. It was important to me because there was an atmosphere of acceptance. In spite of the poor turnout of ordinary citizens ... the public have now realised that they have alienated a whole group of people from society because of political propaganda, and not just when the war was on but for the following fifteen years.

Gary McKay, *Vietnam Fragments*, Allen & Unwin, Sydney, 1992 page 275

One historian's evaluation

Vietnam was not a war to compare with our other wars: wars are measured by the body count, because they are about killing. Although individual families suffer just as much from the loss of their young man, a country as a whole is only affected by huge losses ...

The 50 000 veterans deal with their memories of the war in many different ways. For some, the full-time veterans, it becomes the defining element in their self-image. Some achieve peace by helping other veterans, a few by revisiting the battlefields in Phuoc Tuy. Some are damaged beyond cure, others live productive lives even though handicapped either physically or emotionally by their service. And for others, perhaps the largest number of veterans, their experience of the war in Vietnam is simply not an issue. For them, there is nothing to confront.

Jane Ross, 'Australia's Legacy' in Gregory Pemberton (ed),
Vietnam Remembered, Weldon Publishing, Sydney, 1990
page 213

Use all these sources to add any information and ideas to the table on page 1.



Conclusions

Q18 *Your study has shown you that there are many disasters associated with the aftermath of war, as well as many positive developments. Why do you think that the 'ANZAC Legend' does not emphasise the negative elements?*

Q19 *Prepare a short statement for a history textbook about wars and Australia. Discuss and compare the three wars in your text.*

Q20 *Prepare a poster or display on one or several of the wars. Use text, symbols and images to help get your ideas and messages across.*

Q21 *'Lest We Forget'. This is a traditional wording on many memorials. Imagine that three veterans from Australia's main wars met. Role play a conversation that they might have.*

Q22 *One returned soldier has said that 'the peace following the war is often harder than the war.' (Garnet Adcock in Bill Gammage, *The Broken Years*, ANU Press, Canberra, 1974 page 273.) Would you agree? Discuss this idea.*