Investigating the impact of the American 'invasion' of Australia 1942—45



During 1942 many Australians believed that they were facing a Japanese invasion. There was an invasion—but it was a friendly one, an 'invasion' by Americans. In this activity you will be able to explore the nature of the contact between Americans and Australians during 1942 and after, and to consider the impacts this contact had.

Background briefing

By December 1941 Australia had been at war for over two years. Initially, Australian land, sea and air forces were concentrated in Europe and north Africa against German and Italian forces.

However, with the entry of Japan into the war in December 1941, Australia was suddenly facing an enemy on its doorstep. The Japanese quickly overran Malaya, Singapore, Ambon and Rabaul, capturing over 15 000 Australian troops. Japanese planes bombed Darwin in February 1942, and by the middle of the year Port Moresby was under threat of invasion, first by sea, then by land. If Port Moresby fell, the Japanese would be free to launch bombing raids and possibly invade Australia's north, and disrupt sea supply lines to the United States.



An American warrior



On New Year's Eve 1941, Prime Minister John Curtin wrote a newspaper article that showed the extreme measures that Australia needed to contemplate to try and gain security during the war.

Look at the extract from this article on this page and answer the questions that follow.

The Task Ahead

The year that begins next Thursday will be the most critical in the history of Australia. Here the Prime Minister (Mr Curtin) in a special message, tells the Australian people of the job that is to be done in 1942.

I see 1942 as a year of immense change in Australian life.

The Australian Government's policy has been grounded on two facts. One is that the war with Japan is not a phase of the struggle with the Axis powers, but is a new war.

The second is that Australia must go on to a war footing.

[We] refuse to accept the [idea] that the Pacific struggle must be treated as a subordinate segment of



the general conflict. By that it is not meant that any one of the other theatres of war is of less importance than the Pacific, but that Australia asks for a concerted plan evoking the greatest strength at the Democracies' disposal, determined upon hurling Japan back. The Australian Government therefore 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 inhibition of any kind, I make it quite clear that Australia looks to America, free of any pangs as to our traditional links or kinship with the United Kingdom.

We know the problems that the United Kingdom faces. We know the constant threat of invasion. We know the dangers of dispersal of strength. But we know too that Australia can go, and Britain can still hold on.

We are therefore determined that Australia shall not go, and we shall exert all our energies toward 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.

- What was Curtin's attitude to America?
- **2** What was his attitude to Britain?
- Why might his attitude to America be seen as such a major change for Australia?

4 What would the success of this change in policy depend upon?

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Activity 1

The Americans did come to Australia. They were welcomed by the Australian Government, and the Pacific War strategy was for a time run

from Australia. This meant that large numbers of American 'invaders' came to Australia—and had impacts on the nation.

To explore this American involvement you need to have some ideas already in mind, and some questions to ask.

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impression' column.

Use these ideas as hypotheses that you test by looking at more evidence.

• Look at the images from the time on

page 4. If these were the ONLY information

you had about the American 'invasion' of

Australia during World War 2, what could

you say about it for the aspects listed

below? Record your ideas in the 'First

Aspect: If this were the only evidence I had of the impact of the Americans on Australia I would say that			
Aspect	First impression	New ideas	
Economic impacts			
Social impacts			
Impacts on 'White Australia'			
Democracy and sovereignty			
Relations between soldiers			

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Activity 2



The Australian *Women's Weekly* cover, 21 November 1942



An American soldier in Australia AWM 12179



A scene in Melbourne,1942 AWM 136520

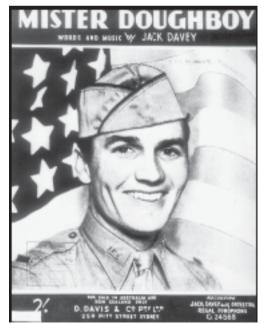
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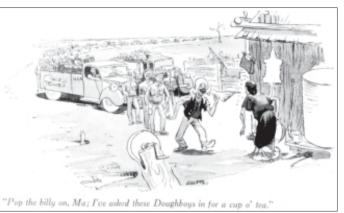




Roy Hodgkinson, 'One Sunday Afternoon in Townsville' AWM Art Collection 21350



There is a man called Uncle Sam Who's already stuck to his guns, He heard a shout to help us out And sent us one of his sons. Mister Doughboy, Mister Doughboy, Gee, what a guy, you sure look apple pie to me. When ev'ry thing looked black For the Union Jack, The Stars and Stripes came over And they helped to put it back. Mister Doughboy, don't you know, boy, That all of us have cottoned on to you? It's a wonderful combination, All for one and one for all, The Eagle, the Lion and the Kangaroo.



Cartoon in *The Bulletin*, 1942. The caption reads: "Pop the billy on, Ma; I've asked these doughboys in for a cup o' tea."

President Roosevelt.

Dear Sir,

I want to thank you for sending your soldiers, sailors and airmen to help Australia. I am only an Australian schoolgirl, but when I see the American men and planes, I feel more secure. Since you are a great statesman I hope you would not mind if I asked you to send me your autograph please.

> Quoted in Anthony J. Baker, 'Yanks in Western Australia: The Impact of United States Servicemen', Jenny Gregory (ed.), 1996, On The Homefront. Western Australia and World War II, University of Western Australia Press, Perth, p.120.

Activity 2 (continued)

Overview





Why were they here?

'I think Australians have given too little credit to winning the war to Americans and I sometimes think that people don't realise how many Americans were lost. And the winning of the Coral Sea Battle, I

mean, that changed the whole... of the South Pacific because the Coral Sea stopped the onward march of the Japanese south.'

(Interview with Doug 'Slim' Otton 1989, Keith Murdoch Sound Archive, AWM.)

The American presence may have had this effect, but their reason for being here was not to 'save' Australia—indeed, early plans had large parts of Australia being abandoned if the Japanese invaded, so that the existing forces could defend those areas that were vital to the war effort. They were here because Australia was to be a staging, training and supply base for the Americans, a part of America's strategy to re-take the Philippines as a major step to defeating Japan. This meant that Americans and Australians faced a common enemy in an area that was of major significance to Australia—the Papua New Guinea area—but that was a happy coincidence for Australia. Had there been an alternative supply area available, and if the conquest of the Philippines had required America to operate in a different area, they probably would not have come to Australia.

1 Look at the two cartoons on this page. Decide which you would choose to illustrate the above paragraph in a history text, and provide a caption for it.

When did Americans arrive?

It is usually estimated that about one million American servicemen and some female nurses passed through Australia between 22 December 1941 and the end of the war in 1945. Some believe this number is too high, and even if the number is accurate it misrepresents the reality of the situation—that most Americans spent a very short time in Australia.

The first 4600 troops arrived in Brisbane in December 1941, directed away from the Philippines where they had been heading after that area was invaded by the Japanese. Their arrival in Australia was kept secret, though rumours of their presence were soon spread by Australians who saw them.

By early 1942 large numbers were arriving constantly, and their presence was openly acknowledged.



A US view of the SW Pacific Command. — Los Angeles Times



"Hang on! You're not alone, Aussie." "Sun" Sydney

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Activity 3

Where were Americans located in Australia?

The areas of Australia most affected by the American presence were Queensland, Victoria, New South Wales, Northern Territory and Western Australia.

Initially most Americans were based in Melbourne.Later, MacArthur moved his headquarters to Brisbane, and the largest numbers of troops were based in or visited Queensland. By August 1942 two-thirds of American land forces were around Brisbane, and about half of the remainder in other parts of Queensland. In 1943 large numbers again moved to Melbourne, when the 1st Marine Division was sent there to recuperate from the battle at Guadalcanal.

The map below names some of the areas where Americans were based in Australia at various times during the War.







Who were these troops?

The Americans included volunteers and conscripts ('draftees'). The first large influx, the 32nd and 41st Divisions, were largely conscripts from Wisconsin, Michigan and the north-western

states. Later in the war all states were represented. For example, the 40 men killed during Australia's worst ever air disaster, the crash of a B-17 Flying Fortress at Bakers Creek, near Mackay, Queensland in 1943 included men from 24 different states of the USA.

How long were they in Australia?

Most had left by 1944. The last to leave, those who were exhumed from local cemeteries, were sent home in 1947.

2 Do some research to find out if Americans were in your area during World War 2.

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Activity 3 (continued)

Americans in Australia and...

General Douglas MacArthur

One of the most interesting and powerful Americans to arrive in Australia during 1942 was General Douglas MacArthur.

MacArthur was commander of the American Forces in the Philippines, who had to flee the Japanese invasion of the area. At 62, he was a decorated soldier who had fought beside Australians in France in World War 1. MacArthur arrived in Melbourne on 21 March 1942 to organise 'the American offensive against Japan, a primary object of which is the relief of the Philippines. I came through and I shall return ...'

> David Horner (ed.), 1994. The Battles That Shaped Australia. Allen & Unwin, Sydney, p.124.

Prime Minister Curtin was asked by President Roosevelt to accept MacArthur as Supreme Commander of all Allied Forces in the SouthWest Pacific. He readily agreed.

"You all felt a lot safer because he was here."

Quoted in David Horner (ed.), 1994. The Battles That Shaped Australia, Allen & Unwin, Sydney, p.127.

"There is a different atmosphere, there is more confidence, more assurance ... One feels as though the U.S. has taken over the responsibility of protecting Australia, & that we are not alone."

Quoted in E. Daniel Potts and Annette Potts, 1985, Yanks Down Under 1941-1945. Oxford University Press, Melbourne, p. 8.

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Activity 4



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Boundarv rider

1 Look at the cartoon above, which depicts MacArthur in the saddle. What image does it present of MacArthur? What image does it present of Australia?

Curtin realised that the British had a 'beat Hitler first' policy. In March 1942 he stood up to British Prime Minister Churchill, and had Australia's 7th Division returned from the Middle East to Australia. and not diverted to Burma, as Churchill had ordered.

MacArthur was keen to be seen as the man who defeated the Japanese—and this worked in favour of Australia, as it meant that Papua New Guinea became the focus of the Pacific War effort.







MacArthur was in charge of who fought where and when. Australia's top soldier was General Blamey, and his job was to advise the Prime Minister about what Australia should be doing. But Curtin took strategic advice from MacArthur, often bypassing advice from the top Australian soldier, General Thomas Blamey. MacArthur once claimed, 'Curtin ...more or less offered him the country on a platter'.

Placed under the American Commander of Allied Air Forces, the RAAF all but lost its separate identity. At one point Curtin told reporters that he was 'subject, in effect, to a form of direction by a representative of another government.' MacArthur convinced Curtin, an anti-conscriptionist in World War 1, to introduce conscription in World War 2—though in a different and limited form.

Many believed MacArthur hogged the publicity limelight, and refused to credit Australian soldiers with victories—at best referring to 'Allied' soldiers when he could not credit victories to American soldiers.

2 To what extent does it seem to you that Curtin 'gave up' Australia to MacArthur?

6 Go back to your summary table on page 3 and add any new ideas.

Activity 4 (continued)

Americans in Australia and...

Economic impacts

With thousands of well-paid American troops in Australia, you would expect that there would be a substantial economic impact on the nation.

Positive economic impacts	Negative economic impacts

1 Read the following information, and complete the summary table above of the economic impacts of the Americans on Australia.

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Lend-Lease

Lend-Lease was the name given to an agreement for Allied countries to receive war materiel and services from the supposedly neutral USA. It could be bought, leased or

exchanged, and made weapons and equipment readily available even if countries could not really afford it.

When US troops came to Australia, some of the cost of the equipment supplied to Australia was offset by Australia's providing equipment and services to US troops—such as rations (including camp expenses, camp stores, hospital treatment and transport), uniforms, motor vehicles, petrol, tyres, engineers' stores, building materials, small ships, naval stores, telegraphic and telephonic equipment, ammunition, weapons, medical supplies and equipment, accommodation, general services (such as meteorology, radio location for flying and technical training), ship repairs, towage, servicing and repair of vehicles and aircraft, repair of boats, shipping, communications and general transport.

Between 1942 and 1945 this represented eighteen percent of Australia's war expenditure.

Local industry and economy

The presence of Americans, and the agreement that Australia would feed them as part of the Lend-Lease program, developed the Australian canning and dried food industry.

The canning industry, previously limited to a small range of fruit and meat, rapidly diversified, putting into tins such food as fruit salad, chili con carne, corned-beef hash, ham and eggs, stew, pork and beans, and roast beef with gravy—instead of the corned beef, corned mutton and minced-beef loaf previously made to UK specifications.

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Activity 5

Output rose from 60 tonnes in 1942 to 20 000 tonnes in 1943 and 40 000 tonnes in 1944. Using US techniques of quick freezing, packers began supplying frozen boneless beef to both national forces, greatly reducing storage-space requirements.



'Under Lend-Lease, Australia surrendered industrial independence and catered to the demands placed on it by MacArthur. Primary production expanded dramatically during the war; food processing and increased agricultural output were revolutionised. However, this was

at the expense of secondary industry, as Lend-Lease discouraged the manufacture of goods that posed competition for US imports... By the end of 1944, two thirds of Australia's imports came from the US... Before the war most of these goods had been imported from Britain. In turn, Australia's exports to America doubled...'

Kate Darian-Smith, 1990, *On The Home Front. Melbourne in Wartime, 1939–1945*, Melbourne University Press, Melbourne, p. 227.

O Go back to your summary table on page 3 and add any new ideas.

Vegetables canned went from 4000 tonnes in 1938–39 to 60 000 tonnes in 1943–44. Here and elsewhere the introduction of experienced skilled management and technicians from North America made a major impact.

Demand for canned, dehydrated and fresh vegetables resulted in a doubling of the land under cultivation for such crops, and a boom market for the growers.

Two assessments

'The American forces created new demands which were hard to foresee with exactness-demands for ...labour and materials for construction of aerodromes, storerooms, camps and other facilities; for accommodation, for office space, for camp sites, for hostels, for telephones and a share of all similar internal services; for locally-engaged office staffs; for food and local supplies of many kinds... That demand stretched out into the community at large. Besides the truckloads of timber or meat, or the acres of ground, or the thousands of labourers which the Government procured to meet American needs, the civilian community became conscious of the demand for a share in the fun, the seats at the cinema, the restaurant or the taxicab, the demand for companionship for the soldier on leave, the claim on recreation. Thus the coming of the Americans was one of the influences shaping both the economic and social situation which the Government had to meet, as well as a new element to be taken into account in the day by day tasks of conducting the war effort.' Paul Hasluck, 1970, The Government and the People 1942-1945,

Australian War Memorial, Canberra p. 225.

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Activity 5 (continued)

Americans in Australia and...

Social impacts

Look at this information on various social aspects of the American presence in Australia during World War 2.

1 Use this information to create a questionnaire that you can give to people who have memories of the period.

Use these headings:

- Entertainment
- Food
- · Contacts with Australian women
- · Contacts with Australian children and families
- · Contacts with Australian soldiers

A Suddenly the Yanks were here. The papers were full of them. They all seemed to have big mouths and square teeth, and came from places I'd never heard of, like Omaha, and Nebraska ... Some of the boys at school started doing American accents, just to keep in trim.... Gregory Turner, the most sophisticated boy in our class, turned up at recess with some real chewing gum. 'My sister's got a Yank boyfriend,' he said nonchalantly. Real gum! ... He didn't offer it round, just let us look at it.

Tim Murphy in Jacqueline Kent, 1991. *In The Half Light*, Doubleday, Sydney, p. 170.

Bit was a different sort of invasion to the one we had expected, however. It was a friendly invasion ... by likeable young invaders from whom we swiftly learned all about gum and God's Own Country ... We liked everything about the Yanks, in fact, and we just couldn't help staring at them ... at first.

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Maureen C. Meadows, 1948. *I loved those Yanks,* George M. Dash, Sydney, pp. 11–12. \mathbf{C}

Have a "Coke". . . Eto Zdorovo



... or making foreign flyers friends The whole ency has not yet been tail. But then the Blits on Genmary was meaning, and the Basians and British Allice were conforming to the Basian and British Allice were conforming to many and British Allice were conformed of the second second second second second class" as experimented 24 hears a day. Hase "Criet" is a wry of anyting were with yea "Criet" is a wry of anyting were with yea or Bandwick to Rassia. Coon-Cele search for p passer Mar refrester - a symbol of frind-

> THE COCA-COLA COMPANY, U.S.A (Linking Limited) SYDNEY

E Dearest Mother;

I hope you don't mind my calling you mother; but after all you were a mother to me (and the rest of the boys) while I was fortunate enough to be in Melbourne. Yours was truly a house of hospitality to a couple of beat up marines.

An American soldier quoted in E. Daniel Potts and Annette Potts, 1985. *Yanks Down Under 1941–1945*, Oxford University Press, Melbourne, p. 207.

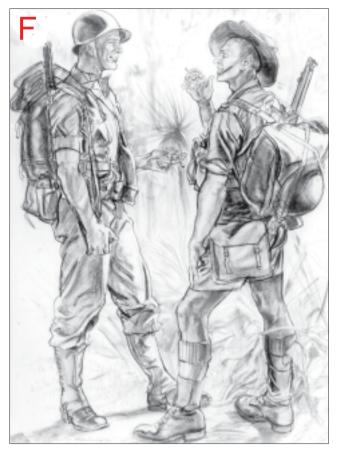
He had a '39 Ford & he took us first for a drive along the beach and it seemed pretty good riding around in a car again. It was very nice scenery & he then took us to his house. We were quite surprised and a little pleased when we saw 4 girls out in the yard. One was his daughter & the other 3 her friends ... They were all very nice girls ... & we went inside & listened to some records ... They were really swell people and made us feel perfectly at home.

An American soldier quoted in E. Daniel Potts and Annette Potts, 1985. *Yanks*

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Activity 6

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There were murders and violence associated with some of the American troops. The best known murderer was Private Eddie Leonski, a disturbed young man who murdered three women in 'browned-out' Melbourne. He was tried by the American Army, and executed by them at Pentridge in 1942. Private Avelino Fernandez was executed in New Guinea for the savage murder of a woman in Brisbane. Another Private, Leon Begay, killed himself after murdering a young entertainer in Brisbane. Six black American soldiers were executed for the rape of a white nurse at Milne Bay. The violence was not all one way. Frederick Everest killed two American soldiers, and was locked up for the rest of his life in a mental asylum. Many Americans were targeted by Australians, and bashed and robbed.

Based on Barry Ralph, 2000. *They Passed This Way*, Kangaroo Press, Sydney.

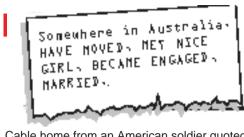
G When they send the last Yank home How sorry our women will be Back on six bob a day, the AIF pay, With no flats or apartments free, Once again they'll be alone Women no Aussie will own All they'll have is their clothes And kids who speak through their nose When they send the last Yank home.

Anonymous song quoted in E. Daniel Potts and Annette Potts, 1985, *Yanks Down Under 1941–1945*, Oxford University Press, Melbourne, p. 295.

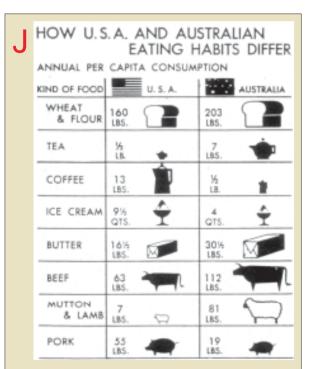
In Sydney you were competing with Americans for the attention of women. I did feel resentment, yes. I won't hide that, I felt the Americans had privileges because of better pay, and also I felt resentment against some of the Australian girls who really chased the Americans.

Transcript of interview with Colin Kerr-Grant 1989 Keith Murdoch Sound Archive, AWM

Activity 6 (continued)



Cable home from an American soldier quoted in E. Daniel Potts and Annette Potts, 1985. *Yanks Down Under 1941–1945*, Oxford University Press, Melbourne, p. 295.



A Pocket Guide to Australia, War and Navy Departments, Washington.

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The American serviceman was better dressed, much better paid, and had access to luxuries denied to Australians. In the novel Come in Spinner about a group of Sydney women during the war, the comparison is sharply drawn-and some of the tensions between American and Australian can be seen in a conversation between an Australian on leave and his girlfriend.



It came as no surprise to me that

Japanese menace was

the Yanks. The English

were better people, but

they had guite enough

on their plates, and the

probably OK. They had

saving people; I knew

Aunt Mollie admitted.

'common' Mr Curtin

was doing when he

looked to America for

help. 'I'd rather it was

the Mother Country,'

suppose beggars can't

Barry Ralph, 2000. They

Kangaroo Press, Sydney,

Passed This Wav.

pp. 32-33.

she said, 'but I

be choosers. ...'

said that Australia

probably knew what he

Americans were

a good record for

that from watching

Westerns ... Even

grudgingly, that

the answer to the



N In September 1942 Brisbane's *Truth* investigated Claims that the Americans monopolised the available female company. Truth's reporters claimed to find that 'ninety three American servicemen were in the company of 126 girls; fifty-two of the Australian services in the company of 27 girls: one hundred and nine girls unattended and escorted by civilians; one white (black-spotted) fox terrier (unattached).

J.H. Moore, 1981. Over-paid, Over-sexed and Over Here, University of Queensland Press, Brisbane, p.222.

Extracts from interviews in 1983:

• In the pub atmosphere, Americans seemed to be 'big-spenders'and enjoyed entertaining the Australian women, yet I didn't notice any major conflicts between American and Australian soldiers.

• I came in contact with Americans and found them to be very friendly. One became my brother-in-law.

• Although these men had money I didn't mind them. All my girl friends went for the Americans. I was slightly against them, yet they did support Australia. They were in actual fact a godsend to Australia.

• I was a young mother in Melbourne, and had no contact at all with any American - didn't even see one.

• We found it hard to cope with them. But luckily I have patience or a few of them might have been in hospital and not from the war casualties.

• Well, well, the Americans. I don't mind telling you now-I hated them. They came over here and caused fights about nothing with our Australian troops. They took over the women side of things with their silk stockings and all. They were loud-mouthed and loved themselves. There was a big fight up in Rockhampton. It was a war between the Australians and the Americans. Australians were coming to New Guinea, Americans were coming to Australia. There were more than just fist fights I can tell you. It was a mini-war. The Americans were all over Australia, taking it over they were. They started the white feather syndrome again. I have an intense dislike for those illegal, immoral, and overweight idiots.

Quoted in Robert Lewis, 1984. A Nation At War, Longman, pp. 111-2.

'Say look at that corner.' He had caught sight of the iitterbugs flinging themselves through their fantastic contortions. 'Whacko-the-diddle-oh! The Yanks certainly have pepped up this town. The place was dull as ditch water till they came.'

'Well,I don't see any improvement. Do you know what I really think of Uncle Sam and his glamour boys?'

'I haven't the faintest idea.and I couldn't care less.'

'No?' He offered her a cigarette. 'One thing, we don't go flinging our rolls around like they do to catch the girls.'

'You're telling me. The Yanks know how to spend. They're gentlemen. Not like you guys ...'

'All I can say is, it makes me and my cobbers pretty sick to come back and see what the girls have been up to with the Yanks. Haven't they got any decency at all?'

'Aw,go bag your head. It makes me want to puke when I hear you fellows going on with all this purity bunk, after putting the hard word on all the girls from Sydney to London. And then you come back squealing because there aren't enough virgins left to go around ...'

'Aw,come off it, Peg.'

'You just lay off the Yanks then. Any brawls that have been started round Sydney in the last couple of years have been started by you chaps coming back from overseas too big for your boots. The Yanks don't go looking for trouble.'

'You want to see some of the blues up round Brisbane and Townsville.'

'Well,I'd give ten to one on who started them. If you Aussies were as well behaved as the Yanks, we wouldn't have anything to complain about.'

D. Cusak and F. James, 1961. Come in Spinner, Angus & Robertson, Sydney, pp. 264-5.

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Activity 6 (continued)



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Australian troops resent the fact that the Americans are better dressed, more affluent, and by reason of their manners, appearance, etc. seem to have taken over a fair share of the Australian womanhood ... However, I will say that friction among the troops of the two countries ... is most evident in large communities far from the smell of cordite-once the scene of battle is reached, the two bodies of troops get along exceedingly well.

> An American war correspondent in J.H. Moore, 1981. Over-paid, Over-sexed and Over Here, University of Queensland Press, Brisbane, Appendix 2.

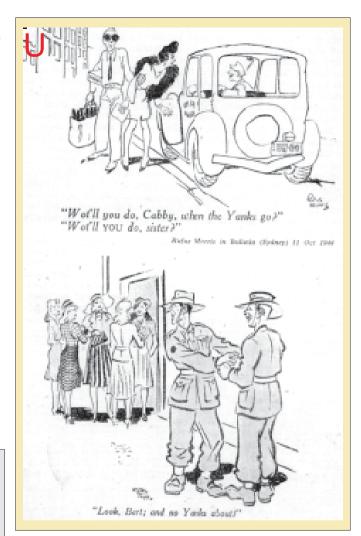
R A cook in the United States Navy remembered the pilfering of the food from kitchens by Americans to be commonplace.

Much of this was taken to the homes of Western Australian families who offered their hospitality to the Americans, but who would have had difficulty providing extra meals from rationed food. Often the American guard at the gate of the torpedo base in Hay Street, Subiaco, would be impressively erect as he checked those leaving for contraband, his hat concealing 2 pounds of butter, his pockets bulging with tins of asparagus. All would soon be passed onto the women of his favourite local family. Eggs, canned ham, fresh meat and even flour were gratefully accepted by local families, as were more luxuries such as chocolates and salted nuts.

Jenny Gregory (ed.), 1996. On The Homefront, University of Western Australia Press, Perth, p.122.

There were also incidents and stories of clashes between troops. There is a legend about the 'Battle of the Trains' in Rockhampton, which supposedly involved Australian and American soldiers shooting at each other from trains. It is greatly exaggerated. There were 'battles' in Brisbane, Melbourne, Perth and many other places, but these were the exceptions to the general behaviour of the vast majority.

> Based on Barry Ralph, 2000, Thev Passed This Way, Kangaroo Press,



2 Go back to your summary table on page 3 and add any new ideas.

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Activity 6 (continued)

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Americans in Australia and...

White Australia

A major area of impact was the presence of black American troops in Australia. The American services were segregated, and Australia was 'white'. Was this a recipe for disaster?

The first black soldiers arrived in Melbourne on 26 February 1942. The black troops usually had labouring, engineering, construction and transportation roles. Many were sent to remote outback areas. Where black troops were in large cities, there were usually segregated facilities.

1 Look at the following evidence and discuss the reactions to and impacts of:

- white Australians and black American troops on each other,
- black Australians and black American troops on each other, and
- white American and black American troops on each other.

A The American troops, the Catalina pilots and others, were stationed out the back of the university and we used to have dances every Friday night, and I remember these black guys used to come and look in the window and sort of tap their feet to the 'Dark Town Strutters Ball' or whatever we happened to be jitterbugging to, and look so much as if they wanted to be part of it all that I remember one night a couple of us went out and said, 'Why don't you come in?'. And they said, 'Oh no, ma'am, we couldn't do that, we couldn't come in to join in with you people'. And I'm sure lots of black service men must have been incredibly lonely in that society because Australia was a very racist society and Western Australia perhaps more than most, because of the Aborigines, and I imagine they must have had some very unpleasant experiences in that little city then. Some girls went out with black servicemen but they were shunned and talked about as if they were the lowest thing that crawled.

Dorothy Hewett in Joanne Penglase and David Horner, 1992. *When the War Came to Australia*, Allen & Unwin, Sydney, p.120.

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B'Racial prejudice is very marked in this part of the world. The coloured man is very bitter – and I regret to say, not without just reason ... He is not welcome, in fact he is debarred from many cafes and hotels, and is subject to humiliation in the ... streets.

An American soldier quoted in E. Daniel Potts and Annette Potts, 1985, *Yanks Down Under 1941–1945*, Oxford University Press, Melbourne, p. 110.

C'lt wasn't as big a problem as I Cthought it would be with the Australians. They didn't resent the blacks. The Australian women didn't resent the blacks ... We didn't have the problem that we would have had in America.'

An American soldier quoted in E. Daniel Potts and Annette Potts, 1985, *Yanks Down Under 1941–1945*, Oxford University Press, Melbourne, p. 187. D The fraternising of our AMF chaps with American troops, which the American Authorities have the nerve to call – 'American Native troops' – they say our comradeship with the Negroes make it difficult for them to maintain discipline ... Evidently slavery is not vet dead.

An Australian soldier quoted in E. Daniel Potts and Annette Potts, 1985. *Yanks Down Under 1941–1945*, Oxford University Press, Melbourne, p. 188.

E Censors cut out any reference to black soldiers with white women. White Australians made one Georgian feel that when he returned home 'and anybody tells me to take a backseat in a street car, I'm not gonna take that stuff'.

An American soldier quoted in E. Daniel Potts and Annette Potts, 1985. *Yanks Down Under 1941–1945*, Oxford University Press, Melbourne, p. 189. Extracts in a diary refer to the 'hospitable treatment of coloured soldiers by the white Australian native' which included 'visits to white homes [and] escorting girls to dances' despite 'efforts of white Americans to change the native white attitude to coloured service men.'

Quoted in E. Daniel Potts and Annette Potts, 1985. *Yanks Down Under 1941–1945*, Oxford University Press, Melbourne, p. 189.

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Activity 7

GReturning home another black GI told a newspaper columnist of the absence of 'prejudice at the hands of the Australian people'. Whites there, he said, 'sometimes actually favour colored soldiers.'

Quoted in E. Daniel Potts and Annette Potts, 1985. *Yanks Down Under 1941–1945*, Oxford University Press,

We were invited to a party, given by the American Red Cross ... & we were to be driven to our destination in covered U.S. Army trucks, manned by MPs and driven by Negro soldiers ... The Negro drivers were not permitted to mix with, or talk to the Australian girl guests ... they were sure shown they just had to ... keep their place.

An Australian woman quoted in E. Daniel Potts and Annette Potts, 1985. *Yanks Down Under 1941–1945*, Oxford University Press, Melbourne, p.191.

According to Len Watson, a Queensland Aborigine, black Australians were also part of this greater awareness. The sight of Negroes 'with money in their hands; blacks who were confident and who stood up straight and looked you in the eye; blacks who were mechanics, bulldozer operators, [and] truck drivers' boosted their sense of self.

Quoted in E. Daniel Potts and Annette Potts, 1985. *Yanks Down Under 1941–1945*, Oxford University Press, Melbourne, p. 404.

Contact with Americans, especially black Americans, was an important experience for Islander people, who in Queensland were relegated to positions of poverty and servant status. They treated Islanders as equals, often with generosity.

`OVERPAID.

OVERSEXED

Carol Gistitin 1995. 'South Sea Islander women and World War II', in Queensland Women at War: 'You had to Laugh', Queensland Government Emergency Services, Brisbane, p. 21. They were in great trouble, the American Negroes, when they first came to Australia. We didn't have any coloured people, you never really saw Aboriginal people. My husband told me that in St Kilda when the white Americans first came they started to order the Negroes out of restaurants and things like that. Australian people got most upset about it and they stepped in. So for a lot of Negro people it was the first time they had ever been accepted as human beings.

Quoted in Kate Darian-Smith 1990. *On The Home Front. Melbourne in Wartime, 1939–1945*, Melbourne University Press, Melbourne, p. 212.

> Lettroops from both countries, but it seems to be diminishing. It actually started with members of our own forces ... These [black] troops have done an excellent job but it may have been a psychological error to send them over there. Some of the Australian women will go round with them and this fact causes much resentment among Australians.'

Report by a US war correspondent, 1942, in J.H. Moore, 1981. Over-paid, Over-sexed and Over Here, University of Queensland Press, Brisbane, Appendix 2.

2 Why do you think there is such a range of attitudes quoted on this and the previous page?

6 Go back to your summary table on page 3 and add any new ideas.

Overpaid, oversexed and over here

Activity 7 (continued)

Americans in Australia and...

Commemoration

On 22 December 1947, exactly six years after the first troops had arrived, the last Americans went home—1409 of them who were disinterred from graves.

There are a few reminders today of their presence. For example, there is a monument at Newstead Park, Brisbane:

THEY PASSED THIS WAY

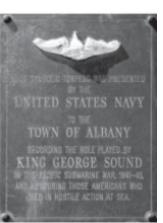
This monument was erected by the people of Queensland in grateful memory of the contribution made by the people of the United States to the defence of Australia during the 1939–1945 war.

Long may it stand as a symbol of unity of English-speaking people in the cause of freedom.

There are also plans to restore MacArthur's headquarters in Brisbane as a museum.

There are memorials at Fremantle, Albany, Darwin, Port Pirie, Coolangatta, Rockhampton, Mackay, Canberra, Sydney.

There are three small monuments at the once bustling Camp Cable, near Brisbane: a small plate inscribed U.S.A They Passed This Way, 1942–1944; a concrete block to the memory of Robert Dannenberg (1918–1942), KIA Dec. 26, 1942; and a small tombstone marking the final resting place of 'Vicksburg', a dog brought with the American troops, and killed by a truck on 8 October 1942. These three monuments were stolen by vandals in 1968, but were subsequently returned anonymously and were re-dedicated.





There is a significant memorial and story at Bakers Creek, near Mackay. From January 1943 to early 1944 the United States Army Air Corps established Rest and Recreation (R&R) facilities in Mackay, northern Queensland.

Thousands of US servicemen were ferried from New Guinea to Mackay for about 10 days of R&R.

On Monday 14 June 1943, just before dawn, a B-17C Flying Fortress took off with a crew of six and 35 passengers—US soldiers who had just completed their break from the war—headed for Port Moresby.

A few minutes later the plane crashed, killing all but one of those aboard.

The victims were buried in Townsville Cemetery, then disinterred and returned to the United States for burial.

This was and remains Australia's worst air disaster, and the worst aeroplane crash in the Pacific Theatre during World War 2.

• Using the information you have gathered during this unit, design a memorial to the United States presence in Australia during World War 2. Include the wording you would choose, and any images and symbols.

2 The American contribution to the war is still celebrated in Australia during Coral Sea Week. Do you think this is a commemoration that still has meaning and ought to continue? Explain your reasons.

Overpaid, oversexed and over here

Activity 8