World War One

Following the outbreak of the Great War (later known as World War One) in August 1914 Australia pledged full support for Britain. This initially took the form of:

- an offer by the Australian government for a force of 20,000 men to be placed at Britain’s disposal
- a Government Order-in-Council placing all Commonwealth Naval Forces under British Admiralty control, for the duration of the war.

By the end of the war a total of 34,959 South Australians had enlisted\(^1\). Of these, approximately 6,000 died abroad.\(^2\)

What World War One records does State Records of South Australia hold?

The war impacted upon the South Australian government through activities on the Home Front and operational military matters. Records about these matters are held in State Records’ collection.

A number of official committees were established to manage war related activities, including:

The State War Council

The State War Council was established in 1915, its aim being to "...deal with all the various matters, in concert with the Federal War Committee, which are submitted from time to time ..."\(^3\).

State Records holds correspondence between the Council and bodies such as the Peace Celebrations Committee and the State Munitions Committee, along with minutes of the Council’s meetings.

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\(^3\) Letter to the SA Premier from the Federal Parliamentary War Committee, GRG 24/6/1915/1166.
The State Munitions Committee

The State Munitions Committee was appointed shortly after the establishment of the State War Council, and was responsible for the coordination of supplies of ammunition by South Australia to the war effort. State Records holds minutes and correspondence of the Committee.

The State Recruiting Committee

The State Recruiting Committee was appointed and regulated by the Commonwealth Government. Its role was to oversee and co-ordinate all recruitment efforts within the State. In South Australia, the Committee closely co-operated with the State War Council.

Recruiting activities of the Committee took the form of posters, broadsheets and hand bills, which called upon South Australians to enlist in the Australian Army or to support the war effort financially.

State Records' collection includes recruitment posters published by the South Australian State Government, the Commonwealth Government and the State Governments of Victoria and New South Wales. State Records also holds circulars from the Director General of Recruiting to staff and other committees, which state how recruiting efforts should be carried out, and detail guidelines for recruiters.

For records relating to these bodies see Government Record Group (GRG) 32 in the State Records' catalogue.

State Records also holds World War One related material in the more day-to-day records of government administration.

Education

The war effort was patriotically supported by many schools and school children, resulting in many patriotic school events. The government banned the teaching of German in all schools and closed a number of private German schools⁴.

State Records holds a collection of the badges school children could earn for services rendered in aid of the Children's Patriotic Fund. The correspondence records of the Minister and Department for Education are another source of information and include communications with military authorities concerning the teaching of German in schools.

For records relating to education during the war see GRG 18.

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⁴ Act number 1268, 1917 – “An Act to amend the Education Act 1915, and for other purposes”.
Police activities

The South Australian Police were highly active following the outbreak of war, due to their involvement in investigations of alleged suspicious conduct and suspected acts of disloyalty by South Australians of German origin.

The Police assisted the Commonwealth authorities with the internment of enemy aliens, the seizure of enemy assets and by conducting raids on German clubs, and were initially assigned to provide protection for State Government buildings and assets.

Documentation about these activities can be found in the records of the South Australian Police in State Records’ collection, primarily in the correspondence files of the Police Commissioner’s Office (GRG 5).

Honouring those who served

Post-war honour rolls were created to honour those who served in the war. These rolls were created by various government departments, and list employees who died whilst serving in the military. State Records holds a number of these rolls.

In 1919 the Public Library (now the State Library) of South Australia began a program aimed at collecting photographs of South Australians who served during the war as soldiers, sailors and nurses. These photographs now form part of State Records’ collection. Some of these photographs have been digitised and appear on State Records’ Flickr page:

https://www.flickr.com/photos/state-records-sa/sets/72157626501163158/

Following the end of the war the women of the 9th and 11th Light Horse Regimental Club donated regimental rolls listing men who served in the regiments to the Public Library of South Australia as a permanent memorial. These rolls are now held by State Records.

For records relating to honour rolls see GRG 15 and MRG 8.

Military activities

State Records holds a small collection of records describing military operations during the war. These records focus on the activities of the Light Horse Regiment and consist of war diaries of the 9th Light Horse, original sketches, maps and plans
showing positions at Gallipoli occupied or taken over by the 9th Light Horse, and a Nominal Roll of the 3rd Light Horse.

For records relating to the military activities of the Light Horse see GRG 149.

How these records may be located

Descriptions of records and their creators, along with access conditions are available via our online catalogue, ArchivesSearch - accessible via the State Records website www.archives.sa.gov.au.

Other sources of information


Need further assistance?

If you require any assistance with your research, please contact a Reference Officer by:

- visiting State Records’ Research Centre. More information about our Research Centre services is available on our website http://www.archives.sa.gov.au
- completing the online enquiry form available on our website
- calling us on +61 8 8204 8791 – a message will be taken and a Reference Officer will return your call within seven business days.